MARY GRAY.

MARY GRAY,

AND OTHER

TALES AND VERSES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE," "CLARE ABBEY," ETC.

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PREFACE.

In the season of short days and long evenings, it is less presumptuous than at other seasons to hope to provide for, or to add to, the general amusement; while the kindly feelings which the coming of Christmas inspires, may be counted upon as disarming criticism, and inducing indulgent judgments.

The authors of the following unconnected Tales and Verses trust to this indulgent spirit in the perusal of their contribution to the public entertainment; and if the chords they have struck are chiefly melancholy, and therefore little in accordance with the feeling of the time, their wish and hope is that they may fall on such happy hearts, that the contrast may scarcely be ungrateful.

Dec. 16th, 1851.

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Tales.

Poems.

The Tale and Poem marked with a star are from another pen.



MARY GRAY.

CHAPTER I.

> "Full many a gem of purest ray serene
> The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear."
>
> GRAY.

"HAVE you then romances even in this quiet village?"

"Quietness is no enemy to romance,—rather the reverse. If any circumstances are opposed to the spirit of romance, they are those where, in much excitement of money-getting, and much excitement of novelty and pleasure, there is little time to cultivate the deeper emotions of the heart. But the fact is, that no circumstances, no places, are without romance. It is but the light which feeling sheds over common events; and wherever there is time and chance, and wherever there are human beings to feel the changes and chances of this mortal life, there romance will be found,—whether in the lonely valley, or in the crowded city."

"But it needs *events* for romance, though perhaps only common ones. I have lived in villages where events have been scarcer than blackberries in May."

"They are rare; and it is for that very reason that I think a quiet country life is more favourable to romance than any other. It requires concentration of feeling to make feeling deep and lasting. 'A succession of sentiments,' as it has of late been well and wisely remarked, 'make men incapable of a passion.'"

"You have then romances in this quiet Brandon?"

"There are romances, I have no doubt; but I was speaking generally. You complained of the tameness and insipidity of my life. My answer was that, 'to an observant mind, life is a continual romance.' There are few families, whether among the rich or the poor, whose annals could not afford some tale, whose tragic sadness would harrow up your soul."

"But I like facts. I am a disbeliever in general assertions. Tell me some tale of your quiet village."

My friend was the apothecary of the small hamlet of Brandon and of the surrounding district. He was a man of natural talent and cultivated mind; and his fame and skill in his profession were so great, that

unceasing efforts had been made to induce him to leave his humble sphere, and seek a wider field of practice. I had been sent down by a considerable number of his friends, armed with advantageous proposals to excite his ambition, and well furnished with arguments to appeal to his refined tastes and his inquiring mind; but my efforts were in vain, and my arguments, as all others had proved, unavailing.

In the course of our conversation I was led to make some slighting remarks on the uninteresting nature of life in a country village; and it was his answer to these remarks which led to the discussion I have recorded.

After a moment's thought he shook his head, and smiled at my request for facts. "Do examples ever come at your call?" he said,—"to me they are always rebellious servants. At this moment I cannot recollect any anecdote which would illustrate the truth of my statement; but it is a true one nevertheless."

We were leaning, in the cool of the evening, against the door-posts of my friend's house. The cottage stood within a shady garden, a few yards removed from the pretty market-place of the village, and at

the turn of a lane which led to the church. The situation was cheerful as well as picturesque, although the close neighbourhood of the churchyard would to some minds have been incompatible with cheerfulness. As my friend ceased speaking the church-bell began to ring. It was a week-day, and I looked at him for an explanation of the summons.

"We have a daily evening service," he said, in reply.

"Indeed! Is it well attended?"

"There are twelve or thirteen regular attendants," he answered me. "You will see them as they pass my door."

I looked around me with some curiosity, for at that time I believed that the attendants of a daily service could be little less than angels. There was not much however to satisfy my expectations. The first, who went leisurely along the path beneath the house, were two old men and two old women in the dress or uniform of an alms-house, decrepid unearthly-looking beings,—as children say, "horribly old." Then came with bustling steps three, neat, respectable, middle-aged women, whom I immediately bestowed upon the butcher, the baker, and the

grocer of the village,—then a younger woman, well dressed but uninteresting in her appearance, leading on each side an equally uninteresting child.

I looked at my friend and shook my head. "There are no romances there," I said.

He made no answer: his eyes were fixed upon another person who was approaching, and *my* eyes followed *his*.

They fell upon a slight graceful figure, who was moving along with a hurried step, and yet with a foot so light, and movements so quiet, that she seemed rather to glide than to walk. The moment I saw her my whole attention was arrested. I observed at once that her rank in life was above that of those who had already passed; but I made this observation less from her dress than her air. Her dress was as simple as theirs had been,—her gown and scarf black, her bonnet of straw; but there is no mistaking the indescribable signs of a refined and elevated mind. She bowed to my friend as she passed, and smiled as she bowed; and her smile is still haunting my memory,—so calm, so sweet,—at once so full of feeling, and so serene. And as her smile was, so also was her face: it was very beautiful,

but not with a mere earthly beauty. She might be thirty, or perhaps more;—you did not think of youth or age: no tint of colour tinged her cheek,—her dark hair was almost concealed beneath her cap; but there she was, with that sweet serene countenance, with those clear, cloudless, earnest eyes,——I see her still as I saw her that evening,——I ever shall see her.

My eyes pursued her until she disappeared behind a yew tree, which quaintly ornamented the churchyard. I then turned to my friend.

"Who was that?" I said.

He started from a reverie.—"Who!—oh, that was Mary Gray."

I laughed. "Mary Gray!" I said. "And who is Mary Gray?" But I forgive you;—I feel that Mary Gray must be Mary Gray and nothing else to your imagination: henceforward I too shall have a particular place in my heart and my fancy which will belong to Mary Gray. But now surely you will answer my question. Have you a romance in this quiet village?"

"There is a tale," he said, with something of sadness in his voice, "belonging to Mary Gray; but

I did not mention it,—I did not even think of it, when first you asked your question, because . . . . . . I hardly know why,——Mary Gray is a thing apart. It is short too, and very simple; and I can hardly dignify it with the name of a romance."

"Nevertheless, I must hear it," I said.—"It is a romance I am sure, and a sad one too. Remember your words,—'Romance is but the light that feeling casts over common events.' In Mary Gray's story there must have been an event, however simple; and that there was feeling I am equally sure. Nay, no denial: I insist upon hearing your tale."

My friend consented, and, when we returned to his little drawing-room, narrated the following simple story:

Mary Gray was the third daughter of Captain Gray, a naval officer of some repute. She was the least healthy, and, as I have been told, the least beautiful of her seven brothers and sisters. (This latter fact I have always presumed to doubt. Less blooming she may have been; but seven children more beautiful, or even as beautiful as herself, earth can not have shewn.) She was however the least

healthy, and the least beloved by her parents; and she alone, of her seven lovely companions, was destined to blossom in this world. Some are early touched by sorrow,—such sorrow as freezes the young blood, and quenches the spring of joyous life for ever,—and Mary was one of these. Fragile in body, —neglected in mind,—slighted in love,—such was her infancy;—at nine years old left, like the last rose of summer, alone,—the bright eyes and gay voices which had gladdened the home of her childhood closed and hushed for ever;—at ten years old, an orphan,—without a friend in the wide world on whom she had any special claim for love or sympathy.

She was not left however destitute. God, who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, provided a home for the desolate orphan. A maiden lady, with a moderate income, and much leisure, chanced to hear of the unprovided state of the child, and in a moment, when her heart was softened by distress at the loss of her own nearest relation, sent for the little girl, and expressed her intention of adopting her for her own. This lady, Miss Turner by name, lives in a pretty house on the outskirts of this village. Mary Gray

was brought to her protectress, and with her has remained until this day. It was more than twenty years ago, and I was not at the time an inhabitant of this district.

The child grew up, but the early sorrows of her life left their traces upon her countenance;—the rose that had been early blighted blossomed on her cheek no more,—the voice, whose joyous tones had been early saddened woke into the music of childish merriment no more;—she grew up staid, grave, composed I am told that she was never heard to laugh, and rarely seen to run. The weight which years of care and sorrow scarcely leave on the mature mind, had pressed too heavily on her budding life, and she never shook it off again.

I cannot say that her home was a soil in which a blighted and transplanted flower was likely to flourish. Mary was cared for,—her bodily wants were provided for,—her health and her education were attended to,—but she was not *loved;*—and love only can repair the breaches that love has made.

Miss Turner was kind, but she was not affectionate. She wished to do her duty to Mary and to all the world; but her duty was done grudgingly and of neccessity,

not from the impulse of a loving heart. Her life was made up of many, I might say countless, good actions; and, doubtless, they will have their reward: but these actions were, if I may so express it, like separate pearls;—they were not "strung each to each by natural piety." In a moment of emotion, of real feeling, her heart had been softened to Mary, and she had taken upon herself the responsibility of her young life. I do not know that she ever repented of what she had done; but when the hour of softness was past, she looked upon her young charge with the eyes of duty, not with those of feeling. Her temper was naturally harsh and hasty,—her affections constant perhaps, but cold. Her own youthful life had been embittered by disappointment; and the rather perhaps that she had borne her trials, to outward appearance, well, they had left deep traces within.

I cannot be a severe judge of the infirmities of the lonely and the desolate. I am not disposed to speak harshly of Miss Turner. She gave a home to an orphan who had no claim upon her care; she shared with her every luxury which she herself possessed. I do not therefore say it with wonder, nor with reproach: I merely state the fact as it was. Mary grew up

without the blessing of earthly affection. To the sweet music of her voice there was no echo in her home; to the feelings of a young warm heart there was no response; to her gentle glances stern looks were returned; to her gentle questions, cold or wayward words. She had many blessings, and she knew it; but among those blessings *love* was not.

I cannot at this time bring myself to wish that any thing in Mary Gray's life had been other than it was. The dry season which is fatal to many herbs and flowers brings others to their full perfection; and so the love that was driven back into her heart, far from dying there for want of nurture, did but strike its roots the deeper and blossom the fairer. I see it now, and can confess that every circumstance of her life was well and wisely ordained; but when first I came to Brandon I felt otherwise.

I met her first as she went from house to house on Miss Turner's errands of charity,—a charity that was twice blessed, being borne by such a messenger. I saw her, and could not but be struck with her appearance and her manner. She was fifteen; and such as she now is she was then. On the youthful face that bent towards the sick and the needy there

was no shrinking,—no amazement at the sufferings she witnessed,—nothing but a sweet, serene, intense compassion: in her young voice there was a tone which confessed her to be acquainted with grief,—yet, as one delivered from its influence, she consoled without faithlessness or fear. I met her thus occasionally, and a few passing words were exchanged between us; but though I watched her with interest and admiration, our acquaintance made little progress, till a severe illness of Miss Turner called me to be a constant visitor at the house. I saw her then in her own home, and my interest and admiration changed to pity and wonder. I never wonder at the strength which endures great trials: not to speak of higher consolations, they are usually accompanied with a certain excitement, which has no doubt been mercifully appointed to make them endurable. But small trials have not this assistance; and, among small trials, the "perpetual dropping of a contentious woman" has ever seemed to me the chief. The temper which can bear such an infliction appears to me a temper above humanity. I saw Mary in the sick room of her benefactress,—I heard her soft tones,—I watched her gentle movements,—I saw her undivided attention to

the wants of the invalid,—but I never heard one word of kindness or gratitude bestowed upon her in return for her ready ungrudging service. I saw her, when the illness had passed away, in the tame and insipid monotony of her daily life,—her time never her own; yet, for the attentions she paid, the cares she endeavoured to render, nothing but sharp words, reproaches for her idleness, and fretful complaints, which would have found discord in the song of an angel. If Mary closed the door noiselessly, Miss Turner was certain it was not shut; if a sound was heard, Miss Turner's nerves were trembling from her violence; if she read aloud, it was too fast or too slow, too harsh or too affectedly soft. When she worked, reproaches never ceased; if she raised her eyes, she was idle; if she worked steadily, she was moping; if her fingers moved quickly, she was "botching;" if her stitches were like rows of pearls, she wasted her time in fanciful nonsense; and if to these complaints Mary returned a soft or a smiling answer, she was pert,—if she restrained herself and was silent, she was sullen.

For fifteen years I have watched Mary Gray the constant companion of this querulous old woman; and, among the many earthly trials that I have seen, I

never saw any that excited my compassion so deeply as hers; for she too was made for love and joy,—she too had an eye for the beauty of the world and a heart to feel it,—she too had naturally the earthly passions which chafe and swell beneath the inflictions of a petty tyranny. You must not suppose that the holy principles which had bowed her to their dominion, enabling her to return soft words for wrath, love for coldness, tenderness and compassion for injustice and discontent, had extinguished in her the feelings of a common humanity. I now say that I can regret no circumstance of Mary's life; but in the early days of our acquaintance my heart melted with pity as I gazed.

I will hurry on to the short romance of the life of Mary Gray.

It was about six years after my first establishment here, that I was one day sent for in haste to the house of a gentleman who lives at a short distance from Brandon. On my arrival I found that my services were no longer required. A young man,—a visitor at Mr. Fletcher's, the gentleman of whom I spoke,—had been thrown from his horse with some violence and had been taken up senseless. A few moments

however, after the messenger, in great alarm, had been dispatched for me, the young gentleman had revived, and had laughingly reproached his friends for their nervous terrors. He was standing on the steps of the house as I approached, and came down to meet me with a manner at once frank, cordial, and respectful.

He apologized for the trouble which had been given me. "It must be laid," he said, "to the charge of his awkwardness;" and he added, with a smile, "that horsemanship he believed was an accomplishment of which few sailors could boast."

I do not know how it was, but a friendship of an intimate kind was struck up between the young gentleman and me. Youth itself,—the mere fact of youth,—is at all times so attractive to me, that it needs but a moderate share of other attractions to steal rapidly into my heart; and other attractions were in this case very abundant. In explanation of the share which my young friend was pleased to give me of his good graces, I can only suggest that I belong to a profession, which (as a boon perhaps in return for many moments of pain and unparallelled anxiety,) has obtained a larger portion of the confidence and sympathy of the human race than any other.

On my return home he walked by the side of my horse, until, in my capacity of adviser, I forbade him to move another step. He then said that, with my leave, he would visit me on the following day.

He came accordingly. It was a fine Sunday, early in June, and he found me setting out for the afternoon service.

"To leave you thus," I said, "is to make a very ungrateful return for your kindness in c... me,—but having been prevented, by my ... on a sick person, from going to church this ... I could not without regret be absent this aft...

"Do not think me such a heathen," h... smiling, "as to suppose that I cannot acco... you. Let us go together, and I will pay my ... afterwards."

As we walked along, I said I was glad to find t... he did not look upon such a duty as a penance.

"Why should you suppose I did," he asked, with some earnestness.

"Too many do," I replied; and with something of sadness I added that in my own youth I feared I should have been one of the number.

"I am in many ways as thoughtless as others," he

said, "but the life of a sailor . . . . ." He did not conclude his observation.

I ended it in my own way. "'*They that go down to the sea in ships,*'" I said, "'*These see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep.*'"

"Yes," he replied, "I believe that was what I meant to express: there are in a sailor's life moments of helpless danger, of awful stillness, when serious thoughts cannot fail to present themselves."

"I have heard many in your profession say the same." "I believe so," he replied.

My seat was near the door; and when the service was over we were the first to leave the church.

"I am very fond of a churchyard and a country congregation," my young friend remarked,—"will you stay for a moment, or are you in a hurry?"

"I was at his service," I said.

He drew a little aside, and stood beneath that picturesque yew-tree which attracted your attention. I see him now, as he stood, half in sunshine, half in shade, on that Sunday afternoon,—his blue eyes smiling in the light,—the wind playing among the curls of his dark hair, as he lifted his hat to the curtseys of several old women,—and an ingenuous

blush flitting over his cheek, while the very audible comments made upon his beauty fell upon his ear.

"Bless his bright eyes," said one old woman, as she hobbled by; and I looked at him and blessed them too, for theirs was the brightness of

> . . . . the sweet spring sky,
> That looketh down in blessing and in love.

Mary Gray approached as the old woman spoke, and turned her eyes in the direction to which she was emphatically nodding her head. I bowed to her, and she also bowed and smiled, and a faint blush passed over her cheek;—a blush which I afterwards saw was caused by the very earnest gaze of my companion. He watched her until she had left the churchyard, then, turning to me, enquired as you have done to night, "Who was that?"—and my answer was the same.

He asked no more, but left the rising ground on which we stood, and glanced at me to express his readiness to return home.

As we walked he remained silent, but was, I think, unconscious of his abstraction.

"You were struck with that young lady's appearance," I said at last, with some curiosity.

He started, but replied ingenuously, "I was."

"She is very beautiful," I remarked.

"Yes," he said, with something like a sigh, "and yet, unless I deceive myself, it was not her beauty that attracted me so strongly. Am I mistaken, or is there not something in her appearance more striking than mere beauty?"

"I have always myself been struck with the singular mixture of thought and serenity on her countenance."

"Yes," he said, eagerly.

"'Tenderly grave, most awfully serene,'" I quoted.

"Yes," he said again, "you have exactly described my impression."

He said no more, and I said no more.

At that time I lived on the other side of the village. My affections were already fixed on my present little dwelling; but I had failed in my efforts to have possession of it. We walked through the village to my house, conversing as we went; we spoke of the scenery of the neighbouring country, of the state of the poor, of the beautiful architecture of the old church, of his life, and of my life, when suddenly, as

if there had been no interruption to our previous conversation, he said,

"And does she live entirely in this village?"

"Who?" I asked maliciously.

He coloured slightly. "The young lady of whom we were speaking."

"Miss Gray!—oh! yes,—she never leaves Brandon." I considered for a moment, then continued, as many would perhaps say foolishly, "I am going to call on the lady with whom she lives; do you choose to accompany me?"

"I should like it," he replied, "more than I can express."

We entered Miss Turner's drawing-room. At the open window Mary sat, lovely most lovely,—her dress a picture of herself, of the purity and tranquillity of her mind. I smiled to myself, and shook my head as I entered,—smiled I believe at my own folly in bringing these two together.

I mentioned to both Mary and Miss Turner the name of my young friend, then sat down by the side of my patient. Miss Turner then was and still is ailing,—a state which, if not favourable to her temper, must render its infirmities more excusable.

The young man stood by Mary's side, then, after a few moments, drew a chair nearer to the window and sat down. What passed between them I cannot tell, but that it was not common conversation I gathered from the earnestness of his countenance, and a strange unwonted animation upon hers. One incident only I remember. Tea was brought in at the usual hour of five, for Miss Turner was both precise and primitive in her habits. Mary took her place at the table, and my young friend assisted her in those little offices where assistance is scarcely needed, but which his then very evident state of mind delighted to render.

Miss Turner was as usual displeased with what was set before her.

"My tea is too weak, Mary," she said, in her fretful voice. "It is not tea, it is hot water." (I fear my young friend was to blame for this: he was too ready with his assistance in filling the tea-pot, and Mary had not the heart to resist him.) She stirred it about for some time with an expression of disgust, then added sharply:

"I am sorry to see, Mary, that the mere presence of a stranger is sufficient to take your mind from your duties."

Mary blushed,—the young man became crimson. He stooped towards her, and said in a low voice, but with a tone so clear and musical that it reached me where I sat,

"I am sorry that *my* presence should have cost you such a reproof."

I hastily turned to address Miss Turner. I feared her lynx eyes and ears; but I need not have been afraid: in her heart, as I soon found, she was pleased at any attention to her adopted daughter.

I rose to go, and my young friend rose also; but again I turned to engage Miss Turner's attention, for I heard him say to Mary, "May I see you again?" Her answer, I suppose, was to refer him to Miss Turner: for, to my surprise, he came across the room, and with his clear brow, and manly straightforward manner, asked her permission to call again. She gave it readily, even graciously, and we departed.

I walked with him the chief part of the way to Mr. Fletcher's, and he conversed gaily as we went; but not one word of Mary,—no comment,—no enquiry. I wondered, but I was silent as himself.

If I had the will, I have no power of making a love story. My two young friends did meet in the

course of the next week, that I know;—but how often I know not,—what was said or done I know not. I was much occupied at the time; and, though the young man accompanied me in some of my walks, I had no opportunity of seeing him and Mary together. I must come at once to the *dénouement* of this singular and rapid attachment.

One week passed,—but *one*. On the following Sunday morning my young friend attended divine service at the village church. There was a communion on that day,—it was I think Whit Sunday,—and at the altar he knelt by Mary's side. When she left the church he followed her.

She was alone, for Miss Turner was unwell; but in country villages the rules of etiquette are not so strictly defined as in populous places, and he asked her permission to walk with her. They turned from the sunny village into a path which led across a meadow to Miss Turner's house.

They walked for awhile in silence: he then stopped, and said, "We have knelt together at a very solemn service; I thought of you, Mary, as I knelt,—did you think of me?"

She raised her eyes: her answer was there. I have

often dwelt in fancy upon that moment;—what must it not have been to her,—the image of love for the first time of her desolate existence stirring the mirror of her heart. One can imagine, but one cannot paint, what the bliss of that moment must have been,—enough, more than enough, to swallow up whole years of loneliness and sorrow.

"Do not think, Mary," he said again, "that I am daring to mix the feelings of an earthly love with the solemn thoughts which should have been mine at such a time. I know that I am not as I should be,—not like you, Mary; but, believe me, if I thought of you then, it was to pray that your love might guide and purify as well as bless me. Oh, Mary! not as I love you,—I am unworthy,—I would not, could not ask it,—but in some measure will you try to love me?"

Her trembling hand was placed in his,—her eyes, tearful from excess of bliss, were raised to his, and then and there and thus their vows were plighted.

I have told you but little; that little I afterwards gathered from the lips of my young friend himself. From his words to me I felt what his words to Mary must have been.

I saw them together on the afternoon of that day.

I gazed upon them with awe; for truly happiness so pure, so still, was awful in my eyes. My heart ached as I gazed, as the heart aches when sweet sounds are heard no more; for I felt that many such hours there could not be on earth.

The young man worshipped,—yes, I saw it plainly; pure and holy as was his love, it still was earthly love; he tried to look above, but his idol was on earth, and on earth his heart was resting; but Mary,—I cannot speak of Mary,—heavenly she had been in her loneliness,—heavenly she was in her unutterable joy.

A fortnight passed, and then they parted. He was to go for one more voyage, and then was to return and make Mary his own for ever.

They parted. He was hopeful; but Mary was more than hopeful. It struck me strangely even then. It seemed as if her heart was so steeped in love and happiness, that pain and fear could find no entrance there. Even in his absence she felt no loneliness,—so at least it appeared to me. Hope and fear, past and future, all seemed to be swallowed up in one present heaven of repose.

Alas! alas! and yet why should I say so.

CHAPTER II.



E l'aspettar del male è mal peggiore
Forse che non parebbe il mal presente.
DANTE.

THE year passed away,—Mary heard only occasionally from her betrothed; his letters, for they were moving from place to place, were sometimes delayed and sometimes lost; but Mary did not need letters for her happiness. It has been prettily written

Dear are such signs to those who fear
  That they may be forgot;
And I too own them dear, most dear,
  But need them not.

Mary felt this I am sure.

And yet they were bright Sunday afternoons when I called, and was told that a letter had been received, and that all was well.

It was June again,—almost the anniversary of their first meeting,—a bright sunny evening. I had been

prevented by a distant engagement from attending our village church, where Mary and I usually met; and on my return home, with a presentiment of hearing good news, I bent my steps to Miss Turner's cottage.

As I entered the room I was greeted by her triumphant voice. "He is coming back; he will be here, —he will be at Brandon in a month."

I verily believe Miss Turner was drinking fresh draughts of youth, recalling old hours of happiness in Mary's joy. I never saw her so human, so full of feeling, as on that afternoon. I do not know that all was brighter and better than usual; but such seemed to be her opinion. I heard no complaint on that glad afternoon. I looked at Mary, and again my heart failed me as I gazed: she was awful in her happiness, —all still and serene as before,—but such a light diffused over her lovely features. It was as if a glory was surrounding her.

The month passed away, and another, and another, and another. You guess what I have to tell you. Even in thought it is painful to me to dwell on those days. I will not endeavour to describe to you those hours of waiting and watching, of insupportable expectation,—of hope changing into fear, and fear

losing its portion of trembling hope in the certainty of evil.

I was the first to be alarmed; but I soon read in Miss Turner's grave glance that I was not fearing alone. We never doubted his truth: we could not do it. If with my own eyes I had seen him false, I believe I should have doubted my own eyes before his truth. There are some natures with whom you feel this.

I made enquiries: the vessel had never reached England. At first the expectation of its arrival was sanguine,—hopeful answers were returned to me, more hopeful than I could feel; then doubts were expressed,—then despair.

Miss Turner felt for Mary, suffered for her with all her power to feel; but she could not express her terrors, and suppressed feeling was more than *she* could calmly bear. Her sympathy therefore was shewn—alas for human nature,—in increased fretfulness, in never-ending complaints. Poor Mary,—yet what were such trials to her then.

She was the last to fear,—the only one who never yielded to despair. What she suffered none ever knew,—what nights of sleepless terror,—what dreams,

scared by the roar o waters and shrieks of agony. She said but little. She left no duty undone,—still with patient tenderness devoted herself to Miss Turner,—still soothed with yet deeper compassion the sufferings of the poor. I never saw a cloud of impatience or distrust in her brow,—I never heard a harsh tone in her voice—(that tone which I *have* heard even from the gentle and the holy when the chords of endurance were too tightly strained) ; but her cheek, that grew paler and paler,—her trembling eyelids,—her sinking form, and fluttering breath,—these proclaimed her suffering in signs that made my heart bleed.

Weeks and weeks had passed away, but none had dared to say to Mary that she must hope no more.

One day I called on Miss Turner and found her alone. She immediately and hurriedly addressed me.

"There is nothing more to hope or to fear, Mr. Wilson. Mary must give him up."

"It is so," I said sadly, "but who shall say those words to her?"

"You must do it," she replied: "*I cannot.*"

Poor soul—she had given Mary pain all her life long, but she had not the heart to do this.

I consented. Was it a time for one's own soul to shrink from a task how painful soever it might be?

"You must go to her now," Miss Turner continued, —"I expected you, and I sent her to her own room."

I obeyed, without allowing myself time for thought. I went up the stairs, and knocked at Mary's door. She opened it. A deep flush passed rapidly over her cheek as she saw me. That flush convinced me that hope was still in her heart. The hopeless do not quiver and tremble: they are still. It is hope that, like the leaf of a tree, moves, with every breath that passes over it.

I paused at the door, endeavouring with my grave glance to quench the fluttering of her breast. I succeeded. She was still again, and, with a smile, a faint and forced one, asked me if she was wanted.

"May I come in, Miss Gray?" I said, gravely, "I wish much to speak to you."

Again a quick blush, a quivering lip, but she said nothing. She closed the door, and placed a chair for me near the open window, where she had been sitting. She then sat down, opposite to me, and took from a small table the work on which she had been engaged. It was a baby's frock of pretty sprigged cotton. We

are such strange creatures; I can remember admiring it even then, and wondering at the dexterity with which she arranged some frills upon the sleeves. I believe I sat for some minutes mechanically watching her pearl-like stitches. She said not a word, nor did she once raise her eyes.

At last I began. "You have waited for a long time, Miss Gray."

She looked up, then down again: her fingers trembled, but she did not speak.

"And in vain," I said, sadly and expressively, after a pause.

"Yes," she murmured at last, but as if the effort to speak was almost beyond her power.

"I am come to you," I began again, endeavouring like her to control myself; but as I thought of her past happiness, of her present deep affliction, my strength gave way: I could not speak the words I came to speak; I could but seize her hand and press it tenderly, while tears, more full of meaning than words, fell fast upon it.

Her eyelids trembled, and her lips quivered, and she turned away her head; but then collecting herself, with one deep sigh, she looked at me again.

"Thank you, Mr. Wilson," she said,—her voice soft as ever,—"I know what you came to say; I know what you wish me now to feel."

"You *must* feel it," I said. "It is the will of God that you should hope no more."

She withdrew her hand, and leant upon the window-sill: there without was the calm bright autumn evening, for it was summer no more; the red of September was tinting the trees. It was three months since that glad Sunday afternoon.

"Mary," I exclaimed, again taking her hand, "how will you bear it?"

She turned towards me.

"Do not fear for me, Mr. Wilson," she said, "and do not let Miss Turner be unhappy on my account. I have known great happiness . . . "—she paused, and drew a deep breath. It seemed as if that word, so full of the past, stood in too speaking a contrast to the present hour; but the pause was only for a moment: the same still sweet voice continued, "I must not, and I do not forget, that sorrow as well as joy is from the hand of God."

I said no more,—what could I say: even then it was she who was strengthening and supporting our

faithlessness and distrust. I pressed her hand to my lips with a murmured blessing, and turned to leave her.

My hand was on the lock of the door, when my attention was arrested by a buzz without,—a sound as of many steps and many voices. I paused,—I glanced at Mary: again that rapid startled colour was on her cheek,—hope in her heart was living yet. She stood at the window, silent, breathless,—I the same;—yes, the sounds were approaching nearer,—steps were evidently rushing towards the house. I know not how it was, another moment Mary had passed me, had thrown open the door,—had left the house,—had gone forth to meet the crowd,—Mary, the quiet, composed, retiring Mary! I hastily followed her. There she stood, a few yards from the house, men, women, and children gathering round her, while the sounds,—and never were sounds so sweet,—fell upon my amazed transported ear,—"He is safe! they are come,—they are come."

There had been the most intense compassion for Mary among her poor neighbours: now the whole village were assembling to bear the good tidings they had heard. As I approached the place where she

stood, a rough broad peasant was thrusting a paper under her eyes.

"See, mistress, see," he exclaimed, "the old ship is come at last,—battered with storms they say, but come at last. No lives lost,—God give you joy. See, mistress, there's a deal more to read."

But Mary saw nothing: the strength which in sorrow had never failed, failed her in joy. I saw her quivering, trembling like a young tree in a storm. I hastened my steps; but, before my outstretched arm could arrest her, she was lying senseless on the ground.

I have often seen it thus. There are some joys which are too awful to bear; the excess of bliss is agony. Sorrow, heavy sorrow, has a stunning effect, —the powers are deadened and they can bear,—but joy is an inspiration from heaven, quickening every power, agitating every fibre; and overwrought human nature faints before the blaze of glory. Is it not Keble who says:

> "We are too weak when Thou dost bless
> To bear the joy."

"Poor thing, poor thing," said the rough peasant, tenderly, "we are too rude for them delicate things,

—God bless her:" and one and all, with the tact of kindly feeling, quietly departed.

I raised her in my arms and carried her gently into the house. One word explained it all to Miss Turner; and for the first and only time in my acquaintance with her, she burst into tears. Well has it been written of sorrow,

"That her gentle tears have weight,
Hardest hearts to penetrate."

Left by Miss Turner's agitation to myself, I wheeled the sofa to the window, laid Mary down, and then left her in peace. I would make no effort to restore her; her wasted and excited powers required rest; and a trance may sometimes partake in the refreshing qualities of sleep.

And now I see that your eyes have brightened, and you are thinking of Mary's joy; but remember her pale calm face, and mourning dress. My tale is not one of this world's happiness.

CHAPTER III.

Misery ne'er disturbed her soul serene,
That like a place of worship age was hushed,
By day and night—or with the voice of hymns,
Singing most sweetly to the ear of heaven.

THE CITY OF THE PLAGUE.

I WAITED until Mary opened her eyes. She then seemed weak and exhausted; and, though she smiled with perfect consciousness on Miss Turner and me, she made no effort to speak or to rise. Seeing her thus, I desired her to remain where she was until I could return to her. She closed her eyes again at once and in silence, and I left the room.

I had only walked a few yards from the house when I met a respectable-looking man, a sailor apparently, approaching it with hasty steps.

"News from our young friend!" I exclaimed, joyfully, and I stopped the man; but as my eyes fell

on his face, I shuddered. Truly his brow, "like a title leaf, foretold a tragic volume."

"You come from the *Albatross?*" I enquired, with hurried unspeakable anxiety.

"I came from Plymouth to Miss Gray, "he replied.

"From whom?"

"From my young master," he said, sadly shaking his head as he spoke.

"Then he lives," I exclaimed.

"Do you know Miss Gray, Sir?" he asked.

"I have left her but this moment."

"Then, sir, she must come to my young master. He lives now,—God grant at least that he be yet alive; but his time is short."

I stood speechless. The man went on:

"I never thought, sir, that we should have laid him in an earthly grave. We have been tossed about days and nights, and he dying; but he had one wish, every day and night calling for Miss Gray. Time presses, sir: he lives, but we must be gone."

And so did I return to her whom I had left in so calm and blissful a repose.

She still lay asleep, or as asleep. In a few words

I told my errand to Miss Turner, and then I stood by Mary's side.

I took hold of her hand. "Mary!" I said.

She raised her eyes and looked up in my face with that same smile of cloudless confiding peace. I shrank from my task; but it was to be done.

I knelt down by her couch and said, "Mary, pray for strength to bear the will of God."

She pressed her hands upon her eyes, and started to her feet.

"Mary, he lives yet," I said, as steadily as I could speak, "but death is upon him, and he would see you once more."

There was one wild glance around,—one pressure of her hand to her brow, as if to recall and compose her disturbed and scattered thoughts,—and then she was herself again.

I opened the door, and signed to the man to enter.

"He has sent for me," she enquired, going towards him.

"Yes, Miss," said the sailor, touchingly, "he calls for you to close his eyes."

"I am ready." She spoke with perfect calmness. "Haste, haste, let us be gone."

The man left the house. Mary put her arms round Miss Turner's neck, and kissed her, then held out her hand to me.

"You will not let Miss Turner be lonely while I am away," she said in a low voice, pausing for my reply.

I pressed her hand, I could not speak; and she left the room.

In less than a quarter of an hour she was gone with her stranger-companion. My numerous duties, and the state of many of my patients, forbade me to accompany her as I should have wished to do. The remainder of the tale I will read you from the account of an apothecary at Plymouth, with whom I was slightly acquainted, and to whom I wrote for information on the following day. He is a dry grave man; but he appears to have been touched by the story of my poor young friend.

"Dear James Wilson,

"There was no need for an apology. I am not (as you justly suppose) an idle man; I make no new friends; but I have time for an old school-fellow, with whom I used to read Virgil,

Horace, and a thousand other names, which I hope you remember better than I do. I do not wonder at your interest in young Mr. Lester. I felt the same myself, little as I had to do with him. He is dead, while many a worthless one remains. I will answer your enquiries as well as I can.

"I went to him as soon as he landed, for my house is close to the lodging to which he was taken. I saw at once that the case was a hopeless one. His body was dead even then,—only the mind was alive, and as soon as the messenger was dispatched for Miss Gray, I thought *that* too was gone, for he fell into a stupor in which he remained during the whole day. He had requested that a clergyman might be sent for, and I summoned an excellent friend of mine; but he called again and again in vain.

"About midnight Mr. Lester began to revive. His first enquiry was for Miss Gray. I told him that it was impossible she could have reached Plymouth. He sighed very deeply, then, after a short silence, repeated his request that a clergyman might be sent for. My friend came immediately: he had kindly consented to remain in the house during the night.

"I am happy to tell you (as from the style of your letter I fancy you care for such things) that the account given me by Mr. Hartley of the state of your young friend's mind was perfectly satisfactory. I say no more on that point. Such subjects are better for meditation than for comment.

"Mr. Hartley remained with Mr. Lester for upwards of an hour. He then appeared to be so much exhausted, that I expected every breath to be the last. I sat down in silence by his bedside, and after a time I think he slept.

"Towards daybreak he began to move again. I partly opened the shutters, and again I sat down.

"'Is there no chance,' he said at last, 'must I give it up?'

"I perceived that he alluded to Miss Gray's arrival. I thought it impossible that she could be here till morning. I told him so as gently as I could.

"'Shall I live till morning?' he asked, almost as if he was petitioning *me* to prolong his life till then.

"'It must be as God wills,' I said gravely.

"'Oh! to see her once more,' he said, 'to bless her for her love,—to feel that she loves me,—to have her eyes shining upon me in death!'

"I give you his very words; and they were spòken in such a passionate tone that I was dismayed. I am a grave man, James Wilson, and the tumults of earthly passion are apt to surprise and shock me. I was about to admonish him, as I thought it my duty to do, when, raising my eyes to the doorway, I perceived a figure standing motionless. It was Miss Gray.

"I made her a gentle sign with my hand to remain quiet: I feared her too sudden appearance. I wished also to tranquillize the young man's emotions. I proceeded therefore with the admonition I had designed to give.

"'I am almost a stranger to you,' I said, 'but I speak as I would that others should speak to me. Are thoughts of earthly love the thoughts that should fill an hour like this?'

"I almost regretted what I had said when I saw his poor dying face flushed with emotion.

"'You may be right,' he replied, with great humility.' I believe I *have* loved her too well; but, in loving Mary, I felt to love Heaven. He stopped for a moment, then went on with a steadier voice. 'Though a stranger, you have been very kind to me:

will you be kind to Mary, if she comes too late? I know what she will feel, for I love her, and she loves me. Hers has been a sad and a lonely life: it was my hope to bless it with my tenderness. I do not repine; but tell her that my last prayer was for strength for her,—comfort for her loneliness,—I would . . . . '

"He paused, for, unperceived by me, Miss Gray had left her place at the door, and now softly undrew the curtains at the opposite side of the bed. The faint light fell upon her face,—it was beautiful;—but it is not for me, nor was it a time to think of beauty.

"I had not observed her first movement, for my eyes were fixed on the young man's face: my attention was drawn, and arrested, and startled, by the sudden sound of a voice of singular sweetness.

"'Oh! Harry, grieve no more for me: what could I ask for more, than thus to meet, and thus to have been loved by you?'

"His eyes were fixed upon her bending face. Hers was as the face of an angel: in his, alas! earthly love was living yet.

"'Oh! Mary,' he exclaimed, in that same passionate tone which I have before described, 'Do I see you, and must we part for ever?'

" '*For ever!* Harry,' she said in such a voice as I never heard on earth before,—'is *for ever* for those who hope, and believe, and love?'

"She stooped nearer, and kissed him. He seemed to catch from her the faith and confidence that filled her breast: the flush faded from his cheek, and there was no regret or repining, no disturbance of earthly passion in the smile that played upon his countenance.

"I have no more to tell you. The smile faded, and he died, Miss Gray holding his hand and looking into his face.

"The scene excited me strangely; and I fear I have written very incoherently. It was not like the lovers' meetings I used to read of in my youth."

My friend put down the letter, and a silence on both sides followed. I was then young and ignorant, and I could not patiently endure to hear of the trials of those who seemed to deserve happiness.

"And this then," I said at last, "is your story of Mary Gray. I do not like it."

He smiled but made no answer.

"And does she still, and has she ever since lived in this village with that hateful old woman?"

"She returned in three days, and has never moved again. The young man's elder brother arrived at Plymouth the day after his death, and he at once and readily acceded to Mary's request, that he should be buried at Brandon. Mary stood by his side during the funeral service. Young Lester's grave is beneath the yew-tree where she saw him first."

"And Miss Turner," I asked, after a pause, "is she still as she was, or have Mary's sorrows softened her heart? They *must* have done so."

He shook his head. "The faults of a long life are not easily shaken off in age. Miss Turner's affection for Mary I feel no doubt is increased, but she shows her affection by increasing *exigeance*. Poor Mary is worried more than ever; and it is long since I have given up the hope of improvement in despair."

"And is the youth and beauty of that angel to be wasted thus?" I said indignantly.

"You speak like a very young man," he replied, "who looks only to the outward appearance of things. Mary's life is not wasted: she carries a blessing with her wherever she moves. The mere sound of her voice has a comforting as well as an elevating power. The mere sight of her countenance is sufficient to

raise the thoughts of those who look on her above the cares and passions of this troubled world. Can you say of such an one that her life is wasted?"

"But her love," I said, impatiently, "is none to be blest with the love of such a being. Is it to fall only on those who care not for it?"

"Mary loves all around her," he replied,—"it is her love that makes her what she is, and she is loved in return. If you speak of those deeper affections of our nature which seem in Mary's life to have no outlet, you must remember that she *has* loved on earth, the treasure of her love *has* been received by a human being."

"Yes, but only to be lost again. To have known such happiness, and then to lose it for ever,—must it not add to the desolation of her heart?"

"Not so surely," he replied, earnestly,—"when I am tempted to wonder as you do, at the cheerlessness of the lot of so lovely and loveable a being, I think of that one bright time, and I am content. Do not doubt it, she is happier, far happier, from the memory of those lost hours."

"Joy's recollection is no longer joy,
While sorrow's memory is sorrow still."

I repeated these lines doubtingly.

"I am not sure of the truth of your quotation," he said, "as regards *anything* that deserves the name of joy. I am certain it is false as far as Mary is concerned. The joys she has known are not among those things which become bitter in memory."

"It is very well," I said, after some thought, "for you to be satisfied. You are good enough to bear the sight of so blighted and dreary an existence. I am not. I still must wish that I could see Mary Gray loved and loving again." With a sudden idea, I continued, "I wonder that *you*, whom she must so thoroughly esteem and trust, do not attempt to offer her a happier home than the one she now endures."

I fixed my eyes upon him with some curiosity as I spoke; for though my idea was a sudden one, it was immediately fortified by the return of a thousand looks and tones, which, in the course of the narrative, had passed me unnoticed.

The expression of his countenance, in answer to my inquiring gaze, assured me that my random shot had found a mark.

He shook his head, however, very gravely, and

drawing towards him a manuscript book, pushed it to me, with his finger on the following lines :—

" Lovely thou art, but none may dare
  Thy placid soul to move,—
Most beautiful thy braided hair,
But awful holiness breathes there,
  Unmeet for earthly love.

More touching far than deep distress,
The smiles of languid happiness,
  Which, like the gales of even,
O'er thy calm cheek serenely play ;
So in the silent hour we bless,
Unmindful of the joyous day,
  The still sad face of heaven."

PASSAGES OF MY LIFE:

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

She's empty: hark she sounds: there's nothing there
But noise to fill thy ear;
Thy vain enquiry can at last but find
A blast of murmuring wind:
It is a cask, that seems as full as fair
But merely tunn'd with air;
Fond youth, go build thy hopes on better grounds,
The soul that vainly founds
Her joys upon this world but feeds on empty sounds.

She's empty: hark she sounds: there's nothing in't:
The spark engendering flint
Shall sooner melt, and hardest raunce shall first
Dissolve and quench thy thirst,
Ere this false world shall still thy stormy breast
With smooth-faced calms of rest;
Thou may'st as well expect meridian light
From shades of black-mouth'd night,
As in this empty world to find a full delight.

Quarle's Emblems.

PASSAGES OF MY LIFE.*

CHAPTER I.

——I have thought
Too long and darkly, till my brain became,
In its own eddy, boiling and o'er-wrought,
A whirling gulf of phantasy and flame!

CHILDE HAROLD.

My Father was a clergyman of the Scotch Episcopal Church, Duncan Graham by name,—an upright, single-hearted man, the very soul of truth and simplicity. I will not dwell on the days of my childhood: they were spent in my father's parish, among the wildest and most romantic scenery of my native land; and it may be that those magic scenes, acting on an ardent and passionate imagination, influenced in no slight measure the character of my after-life. I was an only child: in me were centered all the affections of my parents. My mother beheld with rapture

* The real circumstance which forms the ground-work of the following tale, may be found in Carne's Travels in the East. The details are of course wholly imaginary.

the dawning of a disposition, warm, sensitive, and enthusiastic as her own: my father early hailed the appearance of talents, which he fondly trusted to see exercised in the cause of religion and virtue,—that cause to which were devoted all his powers of heart and mind.

I said I would not dwell on my boyish days; and yet in the contemplation of times long gone by,—of those hours of peace, and innocence, and happiness,—I find a charm almost irresistible. I could sometimes fancy all that has since passed as the wild distorted vision of a fevered imagination, and expect to wake again to the hopes and joys of my early life,—to sit again at my father's feet, and see the gleam of pleasure in his gaze, as he hung upon the words of his beloved son,—to wander once more, joyous and light-hearted, among the haunts of my childhood, seeing, in the long perspective of human life, but one bright waveless sea.

I believe there is no man, however hardened or absorbed by the world, who can revert without deep emotion to the recollections of his earliest years,—to that season of wild spirits, and bounding hopes, and unsophisticated feelings. And though such spirits

have been chilled, such feelings sullied, such hopes long since blighted, there is nothing of bitterness in the retrospect. Perhaps the contrast with every succeeding moment of our existence is too vivid, and the light recklessness of childhood too completely unattainable, to allow us to waste a regret on its loss; or perhaps we may feel that, accustomed to the excitement of passion, there might be weariness in that very freedom from excitement which we yet look back upon with delight.

My father was a learned as well as a holy man; and, while he unceasingly sought to raise my ardent affections to Him on Whom alone they could rest securely, he also laboured day by day to impart to me that fund of knowledge with which his own mind was stored. He was for many years my sole preceptor; and I was gifted with a quickness of mind which enabled me to profit well by his instructions. I was indeed an apt scholar, as ready to learn as he was to teach; and, so far as mere knowledge went, my progress outstripped his wishes. But, to my father's well regulated mind, there soon appeared in my disposition matter for deep and serious anxiety, if not for alarm. I had indeed all the poetry of

religion; I could gaze upon the glorious host of heaven, till my soul kindled into a flame of devotion, a rapture of feeling, which I, in my presumption, almost took for inspiration; but when the hour of excitement was past, the flame would wax fainter and more faint, and at length die away. I could dwell on the page of Scripture,—the stupendous work of the Creation,—the glorious attributes of the Almighty,—the magnificent language of Prophecy,—the overwhelming thought of Eternity,—till my eye swam, and my brain was dizzy with the immensity of the subject; but these things had no rest in the heart, and in a moment withered and were gone.

Mine was an open nature; and in my boyish days every feeling that rose within me was at once communicated to those I loved. To my father therefore the wild enthusiasm of my disposition was well known, and soon, too, stood clearly revealed to his anxious heart, the want of steadiness, the weakness of principle, and arrogant spirit, with which it was accompanied.

Let me now at least do justice to my beloved parent;—signally as his efforts to reclaim my wander-

ing spirit failed of success, they were such as to command even in the worst of moments my veneration, my gratitude, my warm affection. I knew not then, as I have known since, of his nightly watchings, his unceasing prayers in my behalf: I was conscious only of his advice, his example, his gentle warnings, his continual endeavours to strengthen my principles, and teach me to command my imagination and my passions. But of these I was conscious, and though I had feeling sufficient to admire his excellence, I had not strength to profit by his instructions: perhaps, even, I had not the desire to do so. It was to me bliss indescribable to revel in the visions of my own creating,—to fancy myself cast in another mould, and created for other ends than the generality of men. I loved to think that a brilliant destiny awaited me; and the unbending principle, the chastened spirit, and the life of practical usefulness which my father recommended, seemed to me both unenviable and unnecessary.

I have sometimes lamented that my father did not more thoroughly understand my nature, and that he had himself none of the romance and fire, with which his son was carried away. I have thought that, had

such been the case, his efforts, though not more fervent, might have proved more judicious; that truth might have been presented to me under a more inviting aspect, and the calm realities of life rather left to work their natural course in controuling the imagination, than forced perpetually into view. At least, under such circumstances, as my years increased, my father would not have lost that confidence which in my childhood he fully possessed; and I might not have been driven to madden in solitude over feelings and visions which none around me understood.

I have often sought in vain to discover at what precise moment of my existence the passion upon which has turned the whole of my strange career began to take root within me. I dwelt in my childhood with even more than childish rapture on the magic tales of the East; but it was not till my seventeenth year that the ardent longing for another land, which I must suppose to have been almost inherent in my nature, began to assume a tangible form. So trivial are the events which form as it were landmarks in the progress of our existence, that at this distance of time I can look back, as to a thing of

yesterday, to the circumstance which first made me really aware of its power.

I had spent the whole of a long autumnal evening n studying the "Arabian Nights," and after a night half-disturbed, half-brightened, by the dreams to which my reading gave birth, I proceeded soon after sunrise to a favorite haunt, in order to indulge undisturbed in the visions which still floated through my brain. It was a dreary and yet beautiful spot, on the summit of a high hill, commanding a wide range of wood, and lake, and mountain scenery, and far removed from all human habitation; but at this moment my romantic retreat was but ill suited to the feelings which it had been intended to keep alive. The sky had grown darker and darker since my departure from home, and when at length I emerged from the sheltered path by which I had ascended, and stood on the brow of the hill, the vale below was scarcely visible; and I found myself enveloped in an atmosphere of cloud and fog, and chilling mist. After an interval of shivering suspense, I suddenly started from the rock on which I had stationed myself, and, gathering my plaid more closely round me, my whole soul seemed to rush to my lips as I exclaimed:—"Oh! for the

cloudless sun, and glowing skies, and the yet more glowing hearts of eastern lands ! . . . . . ."

From this hour, I can trace through all its long gradation of vague wish, and fervent desire,—of undefined hope and fixed intention,—this one passion for a wild eastern career.

I went late to College, for, with my untameable spirit, my roving inclinations and laxity of principle, my father trembled at the thought of parting from me ; and when at length my departure could be no longer delayed, he implored me by all that was sacred on earth and heaven, for my own sake, and for his sake whose only earthly hope and joy I was, to rouse myself from my unprofitable dreams,—to exert all the powers I possessed,—and to redeem, as far as they could be redeemed, the wasted years of my boyhood.

I gave him my promise, and at first that promise was fulfilled; for I loved my father, fondly loved him,—and the desire of giving him pleasure was the only thing like principle in my whole nature. But this, like all mere human motives, actuated me only for a time. When the freshness of my plighted word had passed from my recollection, and

the excitement produced by change of scene and occupation, and the eager desire for distinction, had faded away,—then my mind returned by degrees to its natural bent; then once more I revelled in my own vain thoughts; then, withdrawing myself alike from the society of my cotemporaries, from every means of improvement and from all outward exertion, I lived in a world of my own creating.

I read only such books as were calculated to inflame a disordered imagination; and Eastern fiction, Eastern narrative, and Eastern description alone, gave me a feeling of pleasure. My hours were spent in one continued dream,—day and night, sleeping and waking; and nothing could rouse me,—neither kindness, nor gentle warning, nor strong remonstrance: all was lost upon me.

At length, borne away as it were by an irresistible impulse, I had nearly resolved to fly from my country, and to go forth to seek my fortune in some Eastern land; but the half-formed determination was happily broken by my father's unexpected arrival. He had been informed of the manner in which my time was spent, and of the delusion that seemed to be upon

my mind, and he had instantly flown to save me—— from myself.

Our meeting on that occasion I shall never forget. My father uttered no reproof for my broken word: he said nothing of his blighted hopes and ill-requited anxiety. He did not tell me of his grief, his disappointment; but I saw it all too plainly, and I hated myself for bringing such anguish to his heart. He spoke to me, kindly, mildly, yet most seriously, of my folly,—of my sinfulness,—of the fearful account I should have to render of time and talents wasted and misemployed,—of Him before whom that account must be given,—of His love, His blessings, and my return of base ingratitude. . . .

He spoke, and my understanding assented to all his words; but my feelings remained the same.

Convinced that I must remain where I was no longer,—grieved and perplexed,—he proposed that I should accompany him home; and I assented to the proposal,—cheerfully assented,—for I delighted in change, and home had still many charms for me.

CHAPTER II.

Dès que l'homme commence á désirer quelque chose désordonnément, aussitôt il devient inquiet en lui même.

THOMAS A'KEMPIS.

The home of my youth,——well do I remember the evening of my first return there,—the joy with which I gazed from a neighbouring height on the little spot in the valley which contained all I most dearly loved,—the exulting pride which filled my soul as I beheld my native mountains, and trod my native soil, and freely breathed once more my native air,—the strange floating ideas too which mingled with these natural feelings, and bore me in spirit far from the objects which lay stretched out before me.

There is no one, perhaps, who, in gazing on a bright and lovely landscape,—in breathing the fresh pure air of a first spring day,—in listening to a strain of music,—in looking upon the sky "in the deep repose of a summer's night,"—has not experienced, blended with his admiration and delight, a feeling

unspeakable,—a vague longing, an undefined desire for something beyond that which strikes his outward senses. This feeling, which the good man hails as an earnest of immortality, as a certain though vague assurance that the brightest and fairest of earthly joys are powerless to satisfy the soul which is to live for ever,—in my distorted mind even this feeling was poisoned at its source, and was turned in all its vagueness and intensity, to the scenes and the climes which my imagination worshipped.

I was now at the very height of my strange madness; and yet that madness was on the eve of receiving a temporary check. The novelty of being once more at home, and the tenderness of my parents, turned for a few days the current of my ideas; and before that time had elapsed, a new and all engrossing object had taken possession of my whole heart and spirit,—my every thought, and wish, and feeling.

A new inhabitant had in the last few months been added to my father's parishioners,—a widow in infirm health, who sought to bury in our beautiful and secluded valley her sufferings and her sorrows. She was accompanied in her retreat by a daughter in

the prime of youth, and a nephew who bore her name. The latter was a young man of pleasing appearance, and whose quiet demeanor concealed from the common observer talents and virtues of no ordinary kind. The daughter, ... but oh! how shall I describe Mary Hamilton, such as she was when I first beheld her,—before sorrow had touched her brilliancy, or tears had dimmed the laughing glances of her eye,—then when her every movement bespoke health and freedom and happiness,—when the fresh enthusiasm of youth, and the untamed spirits of a child of nature, shone forth in every expression of her countenance. Oh! in after days, and in burning climes, how has not my soul dwelt on that form of light and purity!—soothing to my fevered brain as the moonlight of my own bright land,—refreshing as the sound of waters in the wilderness.

We met;—and I thought that earth's creation contained no object so exquisitely beautiful. I saw her again;—the glee that danced in her eye, and appeared in every word she uttered, the sweetness of her voice, the enchantment of her manner, completed the conquest which her beauty had begun;

and, with all the ardour of my nature I resigned myself at once to the pursuit of that object which then seemed to me, in itself alone, all sufficient to secure my happiness.

The few months that immediately succeeded my acquaintance with Mary Hamilton are the happiest that have ever fallen to my lot. For the first time in my existence, all my energies were roused to the pursuit of a real attainment: my heart as well as my imagination were powerfully touched. I loved fondly, deeply, passionately; and soon, too soon perhaps for my happiness, I knew that love was not in vain. We were continually together, and I had no thought but of her: day after day, hour by hour, we roamed through the magnificent scenery that surrounded our homes, and never was the sky so bright, or the air so pure, or the face of nature so glorious, as in those blessed days! My parents rejoiced in my joy, and gladly consented to that which they fondly trusted would tame my wandering spirit for ever; and Mary's widowed mother smiled once more to see her only child beloved and happy, and welcomed to her home as a dear son, the unworthy being on whom that child had fixed her affections.

I have said that too soon for my happiness the conviction came upon me that I was beloved again; and yet that conviction was to me bliss such as I have never experienced before or since, nor did it for one moment cool the warmth of those affections, which Mary, and Mary only, has ever possessed. But still I know not,—when the first exulting rapture had passed away,—when doubt had become certainty,—when I had all to hope and nothing to fear,—my restless spirit, impatient of repose, began insensibly to revert to those thoughts and dreams which had formerly ruled with undivided sway. I did not love Mary less, but she gradually became no longer the *sole* object of my existence:—her image was not less present to my mind; but my love for her began to blend strangely with that master passion of my nature, to which, as to their natural current, my desires had, unknown to myself, returned. We wandered together through the same beautiful scenes; but I no longer loved them for their own intrinsic loveliness, or simply because Mary looked upon them with me. If the sky was cloudless, my eye would gaze with pleasure on its beauty; but my imagination flew to those distant climes where the children of the

East bask under a more glorious sun, a brighter, clearer heaven. If the pure breeze fanned my cheek, I turned with delight to inhale its freshness; but my thoughts wandered to the spicy gales, the air of balm, which in fancy I pictured as belonging to that glowing region where my heart was fixed. Such were the imaginations that filled my mind; and as Mary was ever by my side, to her were spoken my feelings as they rose, all the fancies conjured from the wild tales I had read, and the yet wilder visions that my own brain gave birth to.

She listened, at first, with interest in the things themselves,—with double interest because they were spoken by me; but when my folly had gained strength by indulgence, when all that was personal to either had passed from our discourse, and, revelling in the creations of a disordered fancy, I seemed to forget alike friends and home, and present scenes—that *I* was speaking and that Mary heard me—she began to feel that something was wrong, something painful,—that something was changed from those happy hours when we lived only for each other. I saw that she was vexed and wearied in spirit, and I felt rather provoked with her than myself. I

accused her of coldness, of want of affection; I said that she cared for nothing that I loved,—that I must learn to repress my inmost thoughts, and tutor my words, before we could live together happily. She answered me gaily at first, and then more earnestly; she implored me to continue to speak to her as I had done of all that was in my heart,—to believe that she could never be indifferent to that which I loved or valued,—to forgive her if she ever had wished, if she ever should wish again, that subjects more useful, more practicable, occupied my mind,—schemes perhaps, she added with a sigh, in which she might have more share.

We parted thus; and when we met again, it was with an evident determination on her part to be eager in all that interested me,—on my part, to utter nothing that could displease her,—to conceal, in short, all the thoughts that were glowing in my breast. Alas! in these very feelings, there was the beginning of restraint!

Things could not long continue thus. My spirit preyed upon itself. I became restless, impatient, uneasy. I was angry with my father, because he had again spoken to me seriously of my prospects in

time and eternity, and had told me that life and talents were not bestowed to be wasted in idleness and unprofitable dreaming. I was angry with my mother, because she had said that, if I loved Mary as I pretended to do, I should, by exertion and employment, endeavour to add to the small fortune which my father and her mother could bestow upon us. I was angry with Mary, because she did not look happy as she had done. I was angry with myself, because I knew I was in fault, though I had no stronger principle than my own wayward will to strengthen me in the performance of acknowledged duty.

There was another too for whom I entertained a feeling, scarcely amounting perhaps to jealousy or anger, and yet partaking of the bitterness of the one, and the reckless vehemence of the other,—a feeling which smouldered still, but was ready to burst forth on the smallest provocation.

Albert Hamilton had been an inmate of his aunt's house before I knew of the existence of either, and in the beginning of our acquaintance his conduct to Mrs. Hamilton was so like that of a son, his attentions to Mary so like a brother's, that I almost learnt to consider him as in reality that which he appeared;

and afterwards, when a glance, a sigh, an inadvertent word, had revealed to me that he had not so long lived near Mary with impunity,—that he loved her, with less vehemence indeed, but with a fondness equal to my own,—I was too completely happy, too thoroughly convinced of Mary's yet untold love, to feel any uneasiness at the presence of a rival. It was evident, too, that whatever might be his feelings, he knew them to be wholly vain. We met seldom: I neither shunned nor courted his society, for there was something too serious and elevated in his demeanor, and in the tone of his conversation, to suit my exaggerated feelings. At times he met us in our walks, and accepted Mary's gay invitation to accompany us: once or twice he appeared to make some fruitless advances to gain my friendship; but for the most part his time was spent in solitary study, in assisting my father in the duties of his extensive parish, and in preparing himself for that sacred profession to which he was destined.

There was nothing in all this to excite anger and jealousy,—and yet the day was approaching when, in frantic folly prepared to dash from me the fairest prospects that ever were held out to man, my way-

ward spirit, incapable of appreciating happiness, discontented with itself and all it possessed, literally sought for an object on which to vent its bitterness, and found that object in Albert Hamilton.

It was not till, as I have described, something like restraint had grown up between me and my betrothed bride, that an unworthy suspicion dawned upon my mind, encouraged and fostered with self-torturing care, that Albert was not so guileless as he seemed to be, or so little dangerous a rival in Mary's affections as I had imagined. The thought was an insult to them both, and at first it needed but one glimpse of his open countenance, or one bright smile of Mary's, to dispel it altogether; but still day after day it returned and strengthened. Albert lived in Mrs. Hamilton's house, where I was only a visitor: there were therefore hours when he and Mary must be together alone; and how did I know what use he might make of those hours? Mary had lately appeared anxious and less happy than formerly: how did I know but that repentance, a late repentance of her choice, might not cause that look of care? She had lately told me in words, and afterwards by her countenance, that she disapproved of

much that I said and felt; and I had not candour to admit that she was right, that the change was in me, but concluded at once that some secret enemy had pointed out my failings, and hardened her heart against me. Who could that enemy be but Albert Hamilton?

These things occurred to me at first as mere possibilities; but they were thought of, and dwelt upon, till my brain took fire, and I could no longer distinguish surmise from reality. Unfortunately too, for the first time in my life, pride assumed in me the form of prudence, and prompted me to conceal every suspicion as it rose,—thus ensuring its remaining uncontradicted, and adding another and another subject of reserve between Mary and me.

It was under the influence of such feelings as these that I one day drew near to Mrs. Hamilton's house. The sound of voices in eager discourse struck my ear as I passed the windows, and when I entered the room it ceased abruptly. I saw at a glance that Mary and Albert were alone,—that there was a shade of melancholy in his countenance,—that her cheek was flushed, and that even yet a tear trembled in her eye. The unexpected sight, coming

full upon all my suspicions, outraged, maddened, yet almost stupified me. I scarcely heard, and did not attempt to answer, his friendly greeting. I scarcely knew that she proposed to walk with me; I scarcely knew that I followed her from the house; and I could neither speak nor think with anything of reason till I found myself once more in the open air, and Mary alone by my side.

We walked on long in silence. Mary seemed too much absorbed by her own thoughts to observe my inward torture; and I knew not how to frame my speech with the calmness I fancied my dignity required. Mary Hamilton broke the silence first, but in a hurried, faltering voice,—the cause of which I thought I could well interpret.

"Edmund," she said, "you have been much changed since that day when I was so unhappy as to offend you by speaking my mind too openly; and yet I have been trying to gain courage for another such attempt, even—even—at the risk of deeper anger, of less repressed displeasure. Do you think," she added, after a moment's pause, "because we wander now in silence through the scenes where once we rejoiced together, that your feelings are hid from

my eyes? Do you think I cannot see that the same dreams are burning in your mind, though no longer spoken to me?" . . . .

"And if they are so, Mary," I interrupted with bitterness, "who has a right to complain? I injure no one,—I molest you no longer with my foolish feelings,—and if I am so happy as to be able to lose for a time in the dreams of imagination the torturing sense of external griefs, why should you wish to deprive me of my comfort?"

"Because, Edmund, they are dangerous to your peace here, and, I fear, much," she continued, in a lower tone, "to your eternal peace hereafter."

The solemnity of her manner silenced for a moment, yet it did not touch me: the thought of peace here, of happiness hereafter, awakened no responsive feeling in my bosom. I scarcely know what passion at that moment reigned paramount there,—whether jealousy, burning jealousy, or that restless longing for change and wild adventure which was I believe the moving spring of all my feelings and actions. I burst forth in a torrent of mad invective, which might have been prompted by either or both.

"Peace!—Mary!—Peace! Do *you* talk to me of peace, when you have destroyed at a blow the little I ever enjoyed since my boyhood? Oh Mary! have I not loved,—have I not adored you? Would I not have given all the world contains,—would I not have given life itself, to save you one hour's uneasiness? Did I not sacrifice for your sake, for your love, projects which had gladdened my existence, visions the brightest that ever floated before the eyes of man? And now what is my reward? I who felt a spirit within me which no difficulty could daunt, no danger could tame, no attainment could satisfy,—I who would have roamed over land and sea in search of hearts that glow like my own, and climes where such feelings are cherished,—I who could see in the distance, yet within a grasp, pleasures and glories such as . . . And all this—all, all,—I have resigned for you,—for you who" . . . .

"For me!"—exclaimed Mary Hamilton, with a quickness that startled me, and a spirit that sent the blood in torrents to her cheek. "Sacrifices for me! I knew of none,—I desired, none! I freely gave indeed the love that was earnestly, ardently sought; but take back the freedom you prize so dearly;

pursue the objects which alone can satisfy your spirit; roam the wide world in search of warmer hearts. Little indeed can that prize be valued when the sacrifices to obtain it are dwelt on so carefully!" . . . . . And it is even come to this," she added after a moment's pause, in a tone of deepened feeling; "Alas! it has been a short though joyous dream, and I would that it had never been, or were to last for ever!" . . . . .

Her voice, her words, thrilled to my heart, and I was on the point of throwing myself at her feet and imploring her forgiveness, when she once more addressed me, and with a cold calmness that destroyed my newly-awakened penitence.

"I would gladly know the fault of which you accuse me—the fault which has been conjured up to cover your inconstancy! How have I ruined your peace, unless it be by loving you too well, Edmund? How have I merited the deep reproach, the implied scorn, which your words conveyed just now?"

"Ask your own heart, Mary, and say, can that acquit you? Long have I sought to delude myself. Long, long, have I tried to believe that Mary was too pure, too good, that Albert was too noble" . . . .

"Albert!" exclaimed Mary Hamilton, in a voice of unfeigned surprize.

"Yes, long have I been the dupe of his hypocritical coldness, of his display of superior excellence, of his ostentatious assumption of a brother's claims, and a brother's duties. I have been *his* dupe, and it wrings my heart to say so, yours too, Mary; my reason has long told me that which my heart till now refused to believe,—how, oh! how could I look on you,—on your sunny smile,—on your speaking eyes, and think ought that was not guileless, open, pure, and true, could dwell beneath? It is done,—it is past,—it is all, all, at an end,—and I must seek in other scenes to drown the bitter sense of hopes broken and happiness destroyed!" . . . . .

There was a shade of fear strangely blended with astonishment in Mary Hamilton's countenance, as, with wild excitement of voice and manner, I thus addressed her. I believe she thought my senses had left me, and in truth I was but a few steps removed from madness. She gently disengaged her arm from mine, paused in her walk, and fixed her eyes upon my face.

"How am I to answer you, Edmund?" she

gently said, "Where am I to begin? From what am I to defend myself? Is it possible that I understand aright your incoherent words, your vague accusations?—that you look on me, your own, your betrothed wife, as the treacherous, the heartless being, who gives her affections one day, and resumes them the next—on Albert—the noble, the high-minded, the excellent Albert . . . . . Nay hear me," she continued as I tried to interrupt her, "I speak only the truth, and the truth I will speak, that you look on him as the basest of created beings. If such be the case, then let me say, that whencesoever it arose, howsoever it has been confirmed,—a baser suspicion, a more ungenerous, unfounded calumny never rose in the mind, or passed the lips of mortal man."

"Where the eye has witnessed, the mind cannot refuse conviction," I passionately exclaimed. "Did I not within this hour find you together in deep and earnest discourse? Did I not behold the colour in his cheek, and the tear in your eye? Did I not

"And is it possible that you believe what your words imply? Have you forgotten that Albert has been my brother, my friend, from childhood,—that

he has shared my sorrows, and rejoiced in my joys, and been at all times my best guide and best instructor. I have desired, earnestly desired, to see you love him as he has tried to love you; but you have resisted all his attempts to gain your friendship,—you have been unjust to him, and most unjust to me, for you have forced me to have one interest entirely separate from you,—even the interest of one who has been to my mother more than a son, and to me more than a brother! I have never reproached you for this before, Edmund; but now how can I be silent? For myself I have nothing to conceal: if my discourse with him was eager, it was that you yourself were its object; if you found me weeping, the subject of that discourse was surely sufficient to cause my tears; if I was embarrassed when we met, it was that Albert, who has seen and grieved for the reserve that has grown up between us, had just advised me to suffer it to proceed no further; and I felt he was right yet knew not how to break it. I have said thus much in my own justification, Edmund," she continued in a faltering voice, "though I scarcely think such justification was needed. You have never really thought me faithless. No: the truth alas! is

but too plain; your heart is no longer in your own land; your love is no longer mine: vague hopes, impossible projects, have taken possession of your senses, and bitter experience alone can restore you to reason. My resolution then is fixed, and in sober sadness do I now repeat what I said just now in anger. Take back your freedom, act as if such a being as Mary Hamilton had never existed; leave me to learn the emptiness of a world I have loved too well; and—and—may God have mercy on you, Edmund, wherever you go" . . . . .

She ceased, and, for a moment, admiration, love, reverence, overcame every other wish and passion within me. I threw myself at her feet; I raved, I implored. I spoke as if every hope of my existence was centered in her love, and for the moment I felt as I spoke. But Mary knew me better than I knew myself, and firmly, though gently, persisted in her decision.

I know not whether her firmness would have continued for ever: my patience gave way at last, and with it, the little reason that yet remained to me. I started to my feet, and, after madly exclaiming that her obstinacy was the strongest confirmation I could

receive of the reality of my suspicions, after upbraiding her in the most exaggerated terms for her imaginary treachery, after denouncing woe on the head of him whom I called my bitterest enemy, I rushed hastily from her presence, and buried myself in the depths of an adjoining wood.

During the remaining weary hours of that day, did I roam like a disturbed spirit over hill and valley; now maddening at the thought of the past—now revelling in the visions of the future,—at one moment grieving for the blessedness I had lost—at another, exclaiming with a feeling nearly allied to rapture, "The East! the East! the East I yet may see!"—The strange infatuation which these words expressed at length prevailed, entirely prevailed; and gradually did I bend all the faculties of my mind, all the energies of my soul, to the accomplishment of this my earliest dream.

CHAPTER III.

"What gaudy pageants flit before my sight,—
What visions rise, and then elude my grasp,—
I know not: is it madness in my brain?
On—on—I cannot rest—I'll follow——"

Where the mind is made up, where the feelings are warmly interested, where all the ardour of an enthusiastic spirit is directed to the accomplishment of one object, the means of execution are never hard to find. The questions of where, and when, and how, could be answered indeed but in one way. The East must be my place of destination,—of that there could be no question: the time of my departure must be immediate,—the manner of my going must be secret,—as secret as it was sudden; for I had not courage to brave remonstrance and entreaty,—I had not strength to witness unmoved my parents' agony,—I dared not encounter a second interview with Mary Hamilton,—I dared not continue another

day a prey to my own thoughts. I must be gone, speedily and silently; the night that was closing in must screen my departure; the sun that I now watched sinking behind my native hills must rise upon me, a wanderer and a fugitive, far from friends and home.

It was dark when I returned to my father's house, and far advanced in the evening before I felt sufficiently composed to enter the room where my parents were sitting. I did join them at last however, and earnestly, most earnestly did I strive to look and to speak as if I had nothing on my heart; but the attempt I believe was fruitless.

My father was cheerful as usual,—as kind, nay, I even thought kinder than he had ever been. My mother—oh! never can I forget her countenance that night,—the tenderness with which she laid her hand upon my arm, and, looking in my face, enquired if I were well, if I were quite happy. I turned from her quickly, answering her kindness with affected mirth, then, with a suddenness which only desperation could prompt, I assumed the manner of extreme and overwhelming spirits. I flew madly from subject to subject; I laughed loud, with a most

hollow laugh; I spoke in a gay and rapid tone that grated upon my own ear. I saw plainly enough that I could not deceive, that my strange and sudden merriment excited only surprise; yet still I proceeded, with a vague intention, in every succeeding sentence, to alter the impression produced by my last words.

The evening drew at last to a close. We were about to separate for the night, and the little household were summoned to attend the evening prayer. Then, as I bent my knees before Him to whom all secrets are known, unto whom *my* heart too was open,—then, as I listened for the last time to the solemn tones of my father's voice, I felt a mingled sensation of awe and of sorrow, which nearly overwhelmed one. It was an hour of agony,—it was a night of agony,—and wherefore, then, oh! wherefore, did I proceed in such self-inflicted torture? Alas! I know not. Even at this hour I can give no satisfactory reply to that question. It was infatuation,—madness; it was the effect of a vivid imagination, unrestrained by any principle, unchecked by the fear, unsoftened by the love of God. I could feel a momentary terror at the thought of that pure

and All-seeing Eye, which could pierce the inmost recesses of my soul; I could grieve for a moment in the anticipation of all the agony about to be endured by my parents: but these feelings ended as they began, producing no change of purpose, nor even the wish for such a change. I rose from my knees, unstrengthened, unsoftened, unrefreshed; my knees only had bent before the Throne of God, and my lips only had borne a part in my father's fervent petitions. I had asked for no blessing, and I deserved not that blessing should be poured upon me.

The service was over,—the servants had dispersed,—and still I stood like a statue, transfixed to the spot where I had knelt in prayer. I felt that I must be gone,—and yet without one parting word, without one last farewell. . . . . Before I had determined how to act, I was startled by the sound of my father's voice.

"Edmund," he said, "it is useless, shall I add it is unkind in you, to attempt thus to conceal from us that you are wretched. Can you believe that you have deceived those whose fondest earthly hope is your happiness, that you have succeeded in persuading us that your spirits are light, and your heart at rest?

My dearest boy, I have long perceived a cloud upon your brow, a hurry and agitation in your manner, for which I have been unable to account; but the part you have been so plainly acting this evening compels me at last to speak to you openly, and to implore you to have no reserves with your mother or with me,—your best, your truest friends."

"It is indeed true, my dearest father," I vehemently exclaimed, "I am most miserable! Yet, do not ask for explanation now: you will know all too soon; but now I cannot speak, I cannot express the thousand feelings which are tearing my heart in pieces. I sometimes think my senses are leaving me."

My father fixed his keen eye upon me for a moment, and then turned away: he seemed hurt and disappointed.

"You are wrong, Edmund," he gently said, "in slighting the affection of your parents, in withdrawing your confidence from those whose first duty and whose dearest happiness would be to comfort and assist you.

There was a moment's silence, and then, scarcely knowing what I did, I approached my father's chair.

"Forgive me my dear father," I exclaimed, "and

guilty, and wretched, and unworthy of your love, as I am,—as I may be,—yet still love me, yet still, still, forgive me!"

Then sinking on my knees before him, I added in a low smothered tone,

"And, as a token of forgiveness, once more, as in my happy childish days, bless me, oh! bless me, my father!"

I know not if my words excited surprize; the room seemed to swim around me, and I dared not raise my eyes from the ground. A short pause succeeded,—and then *his* hands were raised above my head, and a father's last and solemn blessing sounded in my ear.

"To the God of earth and Heaven, my son, I commit thee! The Lord bless thee, and keep thee,—comfort thy sorrows,—pardon all thy sins! May He be about thy bed, and about thy path, and direct thee in all thy ways! The blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with thee, Edmund, for ever!"

I rose from my knees, like one bewildered,—just pressed my father's hand,—threw myself for a moment into my mother's arms, and flew to my own room.

The sting of parting was at an end, and, with a bursting heart, I commenced my preparations for departure. The little money I had in my own possession, the scanty supply of clothing, and the few books that I should find it possible to convey with me, were speedily collected and arranged; then I sat down to a more arduous undertaking, even to explain my conduct and announce my intentions to my father and Mary Hamilton. I scarcely know what I said to either. I only remember that both letters were incoherent, utterly inconsistent, and contradictory in every part,—that I was conscious that they were so, and yet could make no change,—that in the letter to my father were many expressions of bitter anguish, many entreaties for pardon, many complaints of the impossibility of resistance to a passion so deeply rooted as that by which I was now carried away;—that in the letter to Mary Hamilton reproach and tenderness were strangely blended,—that to her I said little of "the passion which I could not resist," and much of the cruel inconstancy, the vehement dismissal, which had sent me a wanderer from my home.

The night was far advanced when my letters were completed,—all had long been quiet in and around

the house,—the moon was rising behind the hills, and I felt that the moment of departure had arrived. Suddenly the sound of an approaching footstep along the passage which led to my room struck upon my ear, and arrested my purpose. I hastily extinguished the light, concealed my letters, jumped as I was into bed, and endeavoured so to regulate my breathing as to give the appearance of profound slumber. The step approached still nearer, then paused at the door of my room; in a moment the handle was gently turned, and with a stealthy tread my mother drew near my bed-side. She gazed upon me for some minutes in silence,—she sighed, most deeply sighed,—and then in a low and fervent tone she exclaimed,—

"God Almighty bless thee for ever, my dear, my only child, and make thee all thy mother's heart can wish thee!"

Again she looked upon me for a few most painful moments,—again she sighed, as with a foreboding of all that was about to happen,—and then she left me to darkness and to solitude.

This slight yet touching proof of my mother's tenderness affected me more powerfully than any other

event of this miserable night. For some time after she had left my room, my heart beat so violently that I could neither rise nor make the smallest exertion: a flood of bitter tears at length somewhat relieved my agony, and I determined to delay no longer. The resolution alone was needed: the windows of the room were near the ground, and in a moment the fatal step was taken; and, cautiously stealing through the little garden, I soon reached the road.

In less than an hour I stood on the summit of the hill which overlooked my home: another step would hide it from my view, perhaps for ever; and I paused, and turned, and gazed, till my eyes were dim, and my heart swelled within me. The moon shone bright upon the lovely scene, lighting up every well-known spot, and pouring its silvery beam over a range of wood, and lake, and river. And there beneath me lay my father's house, in all the deep repose of night,—alas! what a wakening awaited those who slumbered there in security and peace! And there too was Mrs. Hamilton's cottage, and a light gleamed from the window of Mary's room: was she still wakeful and watching? and could it be of me she thought,—or

did another image fill her mind? Strange to say, all suspicion in that moment passed away: I felt and acknowledged my injustice and my cruelty, and yet . . . . . . I did not return.

"No," I exclaimed, "the struggle is passed,—the deed is done,—I will behold those climes which my heart pants for,—I will share in eastern pleasures, and gaze on eastern glories,—and then,—and then,—I will return again, and stand once more upon this mountain side, and look once more upon these scenes, —and then I will make amends for the sorrow I have caused, amd claim my beloved Mary, my betrothed bride, my own for ever!"

My purpose never wavered, yet still I lingered there; and suddenly, with a strange and inconsistent feeling, I sank upon my knees. I dared not pray for myself; I dared not even lift my voice to Heaven; but my spirit rose for a moment almost involuntarily to implore a blessing on those I left behind; then, rising hastily, with a tearless eye and bewildered brain, I turned and went on my way. A few hours brought me to the nearest seaport town, from whence I was conveyed to Liverpool, where I took my passage in a merchant-vessel, ready to sail for Alexandria.

CHAPTER IV.

"I left the God of truth and light,—
I left the God who gave me breath,—
To wander in the wilds of night,
And perish in the snares of death."

MONTGOMERY.

I WAS in the East: its glorious skies were spread above me, and its ardent sun shone upon my head,—and was I happy?——No:—still did I feel unsatisfied with the present,—still did I catch at that which was beyond my grasp,—still did I wish and long for the time that was yet to come, and expect, in the untried future alone, to find the happiness I sought.

And here I must pause,—here must I pass over days, and weeks, and months of my existence,—here must I draw a veil over a career of sin, delusion, and folly, such as almost turns my brain to think upon, and the details of which have never been breathed to

mortal ear—but one. Most fervently do I trust that I was then indeed mad! At times I have thought that such in truth was the case; but whether or not it were so, the weary burden has been laid on One mighty to save, and may He in His mercy bear it away for ever. He has witnessed the agonies of my repentance; He has seen my tears and hearkened to my prayers: and He has had mercy, and He will have mercy on me!

Suffice it to say, that my unwearying thirst for pleasure and for change,—my ceaseless longing for, I knew not what,—gradually led me to forget my home, my friends, my native land, the teachings of my childhood, the vague but enthusiastic religion of my boyhood, my father's God, the very name of my Redeemer;—that, horrible to tell, I renounced His holy faith, and assumed the name and the outward profession of a follower of Mahomet,—that I entered the ranks of the Moslem army, and marched under the banners of the Crescent;—that disappointment, privation, suffering, compelled me to abandon the army;—that I returned to Alexandria, and there, that the hardships I had undergone, and, more than all, the torments of a conscience from which every

illusion had passed away, of a remorse in which all was darkness, hopelessness, and misery, brought on a dangerous fever.

Well do I remember the last hour of consciousness, before I was stretched on that bed, which but for the mercy of Him Whom I had forsaken, must have been my bed of death. I was alone in the small lodging which I called my own,—the first time I had been alone that day,—for the horrible apostacy of which I had been guilty made me an object of interest to many of the principal inhabitants of the city. But now I was alone, and I dragged my weary limbs to the window of the little room, and, placing myself so as to catch the slight breeze which rose occasionally from the sea, I looked out upon the high host of heaven stretching above me.

Never had I felt so deeply, so vividly, as in this hour, the existence and the presence of the Almighty, —the purity, the holiness of Him, before whom the very Angels veil their faces. And I was in His sight, —and He was above me, and beneath me, and around me,—and I was His creature; I had called myself His child,—and now,—and now . . . . .

I hid my face in my hands, and then madly raised

them to Heaven, and uttered the name of God. I could not pray, I could not think, I could only feel; and every feeling was like a scorpion's sting. A slight recollection dawned upon my mind that God was merciful as well as mighty, and again I raised my hands and eyes to Heaven, and I tried to weep,—but the tears would not come. After this, all is darkness, all is horror,—torture of body, and agony of soul,—a dim remembrance of fearful sights passing before my eyes, and unearthly voices sounding in my ears . . . .

I had lain for days,—it might have been for months,—in this state,—the shivering agony of fever in my limbs, and these strange visions for ever torturing my brain. At length something of consciousness began to dawn upon me, but such as only to add gall to bitterness. A heavy load was on my heart, a wild dizziness in my head, a half uncertain feeling of identity, a consciousness of some bitter grief which yet I could not clearly bring to mind . . . .
Sleep came upon me, and with it my senses returned. I dreamed, and for once there was reality in my dream. I thought I was a wretch, a miserable sinner,

—I called upon my God, but He answered not. I looked to my Redeemer, but Him I had forsaken. I thought I fell to the earth, and cried in the anguish of my spirit, and in that wild cry my soul passed from the body. I was dead, and yet I lived; I stood on the confines of two worlds, and eternity was before me. Oh! how shall I describe that moment,—the silence that preceded my everlasting sentence. The brightness of Heaven was above me,—but beneath! —beneath!—oh! not the lapse of years has ever softened the impression of that vision of terror! I hung on the brink of the fearful gulf,—I listened for the sounds of condemnation;—once more my agony found vent in words, and I called on the name of the Lord!

Suddenly the deep tones of a voice in my native tongue struck upon my outward ears, and, yet blending strangely with the vision, seemed to answer my frantic cry.

"Return unto the Lord and He will have mercy on thee, and to thy God, and He will abundantly pardon thee!"

It was no longer a dream, and I no longer slept. A real voice had spoken, a gentle hand supported my

head, and bathed my burning brow. It was a blessed moment, and those were blessed words; and I thought that an Angel's hand had been stretched out to save me!

I relapsed again before I could distinctly understand my state, or where I was, or whose was the voice that answered me; but I was no longer desolate: unconscious of all besides, I knew I was the object of tender care, of the most unwearing attention; a friendly heart beat near me, and the only sounds that now broke the stillness of my chamber spoke of mercy, and hope, and peace.

At last the fever left me, and reason returned after a long and dreamless sleep. I put aside the thin curtain that shaded my bed, and looked around for my attendant. It seemed as if truth had struck my senses even amidst the distorted medium of fever, for there was nothing of surprise in my feelings, as my eyes met the serious earnest gaze of Albert Hamilton.

I could not speak, but I grasped the hand he held towards me with a feeling to which no words could give utterance. He, too, was overcome, but only for a moment: he seated himself, and in a few words answered all the enquiries that he saw I would have

made. He alluded but briefly to my home; he said that he had left all there in health,—of body at least —that for himself, like me he was a wanderer in eastern lands, where he came as a minister of Christ, to seek and to save that which was lost;—that he had heard on his arrival of the desolate state of one of his own land,—that he had with difficulty gained admittance to my chamber, and then had found an old friend. The rest, he said, I knew.

There was a calmness in his tone, which his countenance belied: he was evidently afraid of increasing my agitation, and, as he ceased speaking, he rose from his chair, and was about to leave my bedside.

I signed to him to remain, and once more struggled to express my gratitude for services which from him quite overwhelmed me.

"I have done little," he answered, with a mournful smile, "that a heart of stone could have refused. The time may come," he added, "that I shall have the happiness of rendering some more important service . . . . if indeed the frightful tales, the dark surmises, that have reached my ear be true."

I turned away from the soul-searching gaze that

was fixed upon me: it was plain that he knew all, and, oh! shame to human nature, *his* compassion, *his* kindness, stung me to the quick. I called rapidly to mind the scenes in which we had formerly met, the circumstances under which we had parted, and my soul maddened as I thought that he now stood beside me, glorying in the downfall of a rival. A moment of reason would have banished the thought; but of reason I had none.

My companion marked the fiery flush that passed across my cheek, but I believe mistook its cause: he suddenly took my hand, and implored me to relieve myself from the heavy burden that bore down my spirit, and to open my heart to one whose fervent wish was to help me.

His earnest tone somewhat softened my feelings, but pride was still uppermost; and, snatching away my hand from his affectionate grasp, I exclaimed, passionately, that I needed not a confessor. He retreated for a moment, hurt and amazed, then, as if the truth had suddenly flashed upon his mind, he once more addressed me.

"Edmund," he said, while a visible tremor passed over his frame, "I believe that circumstances, or

rather your own wayward passions, did once induce you to regard me in a light . . . . . in one word,—as your rival. If then I gave you pain, if now the remembrance of that pain rankles in your breast,—let me at once, as far as in me lies, repair the injury I have done you. You have no cause for jealousy in me: I am not, I cannot be your rival. I will not deny," he continued, with a faltering voice, "that I loved my cousin,—that I loved her fondly, devotedly, but to her I am, I ever was, but as a brother. And now, as a brother,—as *her* brother,—most fervently do I pray that it would please God to bless my earliest ministrations in His service to the eternal salvation of him she loves."

I gazed upon his countenance as he spoke, and I could have believed that some being from another world bent above me, so pure, so heavenly was its expression,—so unlike a child of earth were his words. I will not say that suspicion, that jealousy, that pride, were gone from me when he ceased to speak; the human heart, my heart, was not to be so easily or so soon overcome,—but I felt soothed, comforted; and it seemed, while he spoke, that something of the tender kindliness of his spirit had found its way into

mine. There was a long, long silence, once more broken by Albert.

"And now that all unkindly feeling is I trust at an end between us," he said, "you *will* look upon me as a friend, Edmund; and at least you will not refuse to join me in thanking Him, who has so mercifully snatched you even from the gates of death."

He knelt beside me, and was about to speak, when. starting like a maniac from my bed, I seized his uplifted hands, and rather shrieked than said,

"Would you have *me* pray? . . . . *I* cannot pray . . . . To whom can *I* pray? . . . . . I have forsaken my God—my Saviour,—I am . . . . . . oh no! I am not, I cannot be, a follower of Mahomet!

I sank down again, overpowered by my own vehemence. He was silent for a few moments: he gently pressed the hand which still grasped his own, and, when he spoke again, it was not to answer me, it was not to condemn my impiousness, it was not to give vent to reproaches,—it was softly, fervently, humbly to pour forth his soul to his Creator. The whispered petition thrilled to my heart, and

I had neither strength, nor inclination to interrupt him . . . .

I have dwelt long on this scene: painful as were the actual moments, the recollection has always been to me one of unspeakable blessedness, for if ever mortal man may look back to the precise day and hour in which the conversion of which the Scripture speaks was wrought in his heart and nature, I may refer to that day and hour all that there is now within me more pure, more holy, more christian-like than my early youth gave promise of. It was a sudden change, but neither strange nor miraculous in its suddenness. The deceived heart, which had led me astray, had long left me to feed upon ashes, and I needed only some hand of love, some voice of love to rescue me from a hated bondage. That voice had spoken, that hand had been stretched out, and I was saved.

Before another day had passed I bent my proud heart to confess to Albert the dreadful details of my eastern life,—for which he was but half prepared. It is the first, the last, the only time that tale of crime and folly has been breathed to mortal ear; and often and often have I wondered that in the relation life or sense did not pass away. Perhaps the

excitement of fever supported me . . . . I know not—the tale was told, . . . and he who heard it shrank not from me; base, guilty, apostate that I was, he turned not from me, but like Him, his Master, he stretched out his arms to receive me, and led me forth a rescued sheep from the bonds of Satan and the wilds of sin.

I will not dwell upon the hours, the days, the weeks that followed. We were alone, for the infectious nature of my disease kept at a distance all but the hireling paid to attend me, and him whose love asked not, needed not, a reward,——save one. We were alone,—Albert and I,—the pure and the sinner,—and I walked through darker paths than the valley of the shadow of death, even through the darkness of despair; but he never left me, never flagged, never wearied: he hushed my doubts,—he stilled the frenzy of my remorse,—he turned my wearied eyes from the sleepless night of the past to the blessed dawn of light and peace in the future.

And he had his reward, the one reward for which he asked; for to his hand was it given to bring to me the cup of salvation, and to his lips to teach me to call upon the name of the Lord.

As my mind became more calm, and my health began to return, Albert spoke to me again of home, of the effect my departure had produced there, the misery of my parents, the anguish of . . . . . he hesitated for a moment, and then added—of Mary. He told me also, that soon after that event Mrs. Hamilton's long sufferings had come to a close, and that she had expired in Mary's arms,—that on her death-bed she had committed her beloved and only child to my father's protection, and Mary was now an inmate of his house. He said that, having seen her established with those by whom she was loved as a daughter, he had torn himself from the land she lived in, the air she breathed,—he had quitted for ever the presence of one, the hope of whose love had, perhaps unknown to himself, gilded his early years, and in whose neighbourhood he could never sufficiently learn to fix his affections on the world beyond the grave. He told me that, immediately previous to his departure from Scotland, strange and vague reports concerning me,—alas! how well founded,—originating no one knew where,—had been circulated through our neighbourhood, that they had reached my father's ears, and, though but half

believed, had filled him with terror,—that he had implored Albert to make Alexandria his place of destination, and for his sake, and for Mary's sake, and for the sake of God who had compassion on the erring, to spare no exertions to discover and, if it might be, to reclaim me. He spoke of the gratitude that filled his heart, that his exertions had been so far blessed. And then he turned to his own future prospects, his plans, his hopes, his dreams; and while he spoke his cheek flushed, and his eyes sparkled, as I have seen the cheeks of the children of earth flush, and their eyes kindle, when they spoke of the world in which *their* treasure and *their* hearts were laid.

"But my first duty," he said, "and my most anxious care, is to see you safely removed from this land of darkness and misery. Till this is accomplished, I can have no rest."

To effect this removal was indeed a task of no ordinary difficulty, for Albert's character, and constant attendance on me, had become known; and the effect of his ministrations, he had every reason to suppose, was partially suspected. It soon became apparent that we were watched, and Albert saw that

no time must be lost. With some risk he succeeded in making known my case, and interesting in my favor some of the principal Christian merchants in the city, and with their assistance secured for me a passage in a vessel then in the harbour, and on the point of sailing for England. By dint of promises, of threats, and of bribes—bribes which were supplied from his slender purse, for mine had long been exhausted,—he procured, on the day the vessel was to sail, the services and the promised secrecy of a party of boatmen, whom he engaged to row him and a friend at midnight across the harbour. Another bribe secured the silence, and the assistance of the man who had waited upon me during my illness; and this was all that could be done in the way of precaution and arrangement. All was prepared before I even knew that a ship was in readiness, or the means of escape possible, for Albert had earnestly sought to spare me every needless anxiety, and now a few hours were to witness my departure.

There is ever a weariness in the hours that precede a time of expected danger, or excitement, or unusual exertion, and for one moment I felt this weariness, and earnestly longed for midnight; but then, as I

met the anxious eye of him who sat beside the couch on which I languidly reclined, and thought that perhaps I should meet that gaze no more, for ever,—as I looked in his countenance and called to remembrance all he had done, and all he had suffered for me,—how he had found, and now how he left me,—my heart swelled within me, and I wished that even these weary hours might be prolonged; and I felt that when I might behold him no more, a blank would be in my existence which nothing earthly could ever fill up.

The hour of departure came at length, and in the dead of the night, under a dark and lowering sky, in that awful stillness of all-created nature which sometimes precedes a storm,—feeble, helpless, as an infant of a few months old, was I lifted by Albert into the boat which he had hired to convey me to the vessel in the harbour. The dash of the oars,—the ripple of the waters,—the hoarse whispers of the seamen as they prophesied a coming tempest,—roused me from the stupor in which I lay at the bottom of the boat, and I strove to rise, and take a last look of that long sighed-for shore, which was about to pass from my eyes for ever. Long and

vainly I sought to penetrate the gloom that overhung every object, and which the few glimmering lights that yet remained in the city rather tended to increase than diminish; but my imagination supplied the place of that which I could not distinguish,—and this was my last view of the East.

"Farewell, farewell," I involuntarily exclaimed, as I sunk back, exhausted with the momentary exertion,—"farewell thou wild and shadowy land! Clouds and tempests rest upon thee, and darkness more than the eye may look upon; but the day will come that light shall dawn upon thee, and fairer than the fairest of thy regions, shall that bright dawning be!"

"God grant it!" whispered the fervent tones of Albert Hamilton; and once more all was silence in the boat and on the sea.

We neared the ship at last, and the boatmen rested on their oars, and hailed the crew: lights appeared in all parts of the vessel, a hundred voices in my native tongue were raised to bid us welcome, and amidst one long loud shout which burst from every quarter of the deck, and which marked the anxiety that had been felt in my fate, I was received into the midst of my countrymen. I was too much ex-

hausted to speak my thanks to the kind warm hearts that surrounded me, but Albert expressed them for me, and, taking the Captain aside, he represented my precarious and feeble state, and implored that for the present I might remain undisturbed, even by kindness. He saw me placed upon a couch in the most remote corner of the deck, and then, regardless of the boatmen's entreaties that he would return before the storm burst in its fury, he accompanied the Captain into the cabin allotted to my use, to make, himself, every arrangement for my future comfort.

When all was done, he returned to me silently and alone.

"It is cruel perhaps," at length he said, "to increase your agitation, only for the gratification of my own selfish feelings, and yet—I cannot part from you, Edmund,—for ever on this side the grave,—without one last last farewell!"

He paused, and I could not answer him, for my very soul seemed dead within me: I could only clasp his hand, and bid that pressure speak for me.

There was indeed enough in external objects, setting aside the agony of parting, to overwhelm a stronger

frame than mine, and take away the power of utterance. The blackness of the sky had increased tenfold since our entrance into the ship,—the heat was intense,—the slight current of air, which at intervals passed across the deck, felt heavy and fiery,—the same awful stillness reigned above our heads, but beneath the waters began to be agitated by some unseen cause, and far far over the sea might be heard a low, hollow, moaning sound, like the first rising of a mighty wind, or the pealing of distant thunder. The entreaties of the boatmen, mingled with threats, and imprecations upon Albert, became louder and more loud.

"I must go," he said hurriedly. "Edmund, there is a world without partings and without tears, and there my heart tells me we shall meet again. . . . . To God,—the Christian's God, I commend you. May His peace which passeth all understanding be with you for ever and ever!"

The full light of a lantern suspended above my head fell upon his countenance, as he raised his eyes to heaven, and blessed me,—and truly it was the face of an angel. He turned, and was about to leave me, when I started up, and almost shrieked

his name. He was leaving me for ever,—and could I be silent?

He returned; and in faltering accents I endeavoured to speak the love and reverence with which I regarded him,—to express the gratitude I felt for such benefits as never man before had received from man,—and then I paused and gazed into his face and asked,—how I could repay.

He pressed my hand, and remained a moment silent, then in a low and hurried voice he said,

"I have one wish, one request, Edmund, dear Edmund, and if in that wish there is too much of earthliness, may the God who knows my weakness, pity and forgive me! When you are once more in our own distant land, in the midst of those who are near and dear to you,—happy, beloving and beloved,—will you sometimes name my name to her, whose image even now, alas! I feel, dwells in my soul with too fond idolatry? will you recall me to her memory? will you together kneel before the Throne of Grace, and implore a blessing on the lonely exile, who in all his wanderings, in sickness and in health, in death as in life, will never cease to pray for her,—and for you too, Edmund?"

He wrung my hand, turned quickly from me, and I saw him no more. The dash of oars fell on my ear,—the imaptient cries of the boatmen ceased, the little boat shot rapidly by me, and in a moment was far from.the ship. I raised myself on my couch, and traced it by the light that glimmered in the stern, till at length my head was dizzy and my eye-balls throbbed with intense watching, and I fell back and slept a heavy slumber.

I know little that passed after this : I have a slight recollection of the captain's approach, of the iron grasp with which he seized my hand, and the stentorian tones which shouted in my ear that the boat was safe in land. I remember too a crash of thunder, a wild and vivid stream of lightning, a convulsion of the elements which I took for the end of the world, —a rocking, creaking, straining of the ship, a turmoil within and without, which I would have given my life to silence, but for a moment,—and then all is blank, a weary blank,—for agitation and fatigue had brought on a return of the fever, and it never entirely left me, till the fresh breezes of a northern clime had fanned my brow, and the smiling shores of England had once more gladdened my eye-sight.

CHAPTER V.

> "It needs our hearts be weaned from earth,—
> It needs that we be driven,
> By loss of every earthly stay,
> To seek our joys in Heaven!"

My first care on my arrival in England was, in the House of God, and in the face of the congregation, to renew that broken covenant, and those forgotten vows, which now were so precious in my sight, and to devote myself once more to be a child of God, and a member of Christ, and as I humbly trusted an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.

It was an hour never to be forgotten. I had myself desired to be made known,—to approach the Altar as a miserable and humbled sinner. I stood alone, in the midst of hundreds,—every eye fixed upon me,—an object of wonder, perhaps of disgust and horror, to all; and yet I thought not of this,—I cared not for this,—I was come to lay my burden

down at the feet of my Saviour, and save the thought of His mercy, and His purity, I had none besides.

A few days of rapid travelling brought me, weak and wearied in mind and body, to a small town in the immediate neighbourhood of my father's parish. I might there have learnt all my heart panted to be assured of; but I dared not ask any question: I *could* not make myself known; I dreaded to hear any news. A horrible fear was in my heart, a conviction that evil,—evil so richly deserved, so long, so mercifully withheld,—now at length awaited me. Was my father still living? my mother? Mary? I shuddered, as thoughts of that which might be rose one after another in my mind; and sick at heart, trembling, irresolute, I hurried out of the town, and pursued my homeward path.

I was within a few yards of my childhood's home, and an indescribable feeling prevented me from following the common road to the house. I longed to behold it, and be myself unseen: I thought that even in its exterior I could read if any change had happened there. Dark thoughts, fearful surmisings, were in my mind; but I felt that even these were preferable to certainty,—the certainty I dreaded.

I plunged therefore into a little thicket which surrounded the garden, and which gave me a view of the front of the house. The group which I beheld upon the sloping lawn suddenly arrested my steps,—my very breathing. My father! . . . . oh! my father! . . .

There are moments in our existence, the memory of which seem as it were branded upon the brain in characters of fire; and this was one of them. He was seated, or rather lying, in a large arm-chair, supported on all sides by pillows; the last rays of the setting sun played upon his venerable forehead, and the faint soft breeze just raised the silvery locks that shaded it, and then let them fall again: it was the only thing like motion in the whole scene. His eyes were closed,—his pale features in the deep repose of a death-like slumber, or of death itself,—I knew not which. My mother, on one side, bent above him: her face was averted from me, but her whole attitude was that of deep, intense watching. On the other side, kneeling at my father's feet, was Mary Hamilton,—not as I had first beheld her, in the full glow and brilliancy of health and happiness,—not as I had seen her in our parting

hour, with varying cheek and sparkling eye, and life in every feature,—pale, still, transparent as an alabaster statue, her clasped hands resting on his knees, her eyes fixed upon his face. Her countenance was too calm to express anxiety, too angelic for despair; and yet it would have seemed that both had been borne to the very extreme of human endurance, and now at last that all again was peace, as if hopelessness of earthly good had sent her young heart for refuge where rest is only to be found.

I stood for a moment, transfixed to the spot, then, regardless of consequences, I rushed madly forward; but the slight rustling of my footsteps aroused Mary Hamilton: she started forward as if she had seen a terrific vision,—the blood rushed in a torrent to her brow,—and for an instant I paused, and listened with horror for the shriek that seemed about to break the stillness of that scene. But the emotion was mastered: she raised her hand imploringly, as a sign to me to return from whence I came; then rising from her knees, with a quick light step she followed me to my place of concealment.

We met,—without a word, a sign of greeting I dared not clasp her to my heart,—I dared not take

her hand,—I dared not even approach her: never had I felt the depth of my own vileness as at this moment that she stood before me,—so still, so pure, so saint-like. I could only bury my face in my hands, and utter "Mary!"

"Thank Heaven that I have heard the tones of your voice, Edmund," she said hurriedly; "thank Heaven that it is indeed you yourself! My head is so weak that I can scarcely separate illusion from reality; and your coming now,—at this moment,—is a blessing so great,—so unlooked for,—so overwhelming" . . . . .

Her voice faltered; she seemed to gasp for breath: she looked at me, and her countenance changed to an expression of agony.

"This is no time for words," at length she said, "and yet there is one question I would ask. We have heard dreadful tales,—tales that make the blood run cold, and madden the spirit. Say but that they are false, Edmund, dear Edmund, and all will be forgotten, all will be forgiven. Edmund, oh! answer me."

And what could I answer?—I could only groan, in the bitterness of my soul, and pray that God

would give me strength to bear anguish such as man has seldom suffered. She turned from me in silence: I saw that she trembled violently, and once or twice she seemed on the point of speaking, but her lips refused their office.

"Mary!" at length I said, "there are no words you can use, there are no thoughts you can frame, that will express the full extent of guilt like mine. And yet, if God has called me from the error of my ways,—if He has taken pity on my penitence and heard my cry for mercy,—will you, Mary, cast me off for ever?—Will *he*" . . . . .

I could not name my father; but, suddenly breaking off, I exclaimed,

"Oh! tell me if all that I now witness is to be laid to my charge? Say not,—oh! say not, Mary, that *this* is the consequence of my crimes" . . . .

I was interrupted by the sound of my father's voice: he had awoke, and faintly uttered the name of Mary. She gave me her hand quickly, and I clasped it to my heart: she bid me remain concealed till she had prepared my parents for my appearance, and in another moment she was once more kneeling by my father's side. He smiled as she approached, and

fondly laid his hand upon her head, and blessed her. I was near enough to see every motion, and the air was so still, that, with attentive listening, I could hear the faintest word,—and those words have been treasured in my soul, and dwelt upon through long and dreary years, till they have become as it were a part of my existence.

"It is many months since I have slept so calmly," my father said; "the quietness of the evening seemed to enter into my soul, and my dreams were full of peace. But this cannot last," he added, after a pause. "I feel hour by hour, moment after moment, that my end approaches; and, blessed be God! there is no pain in the thought. Mary," he continued, "you will not forsake *her* when I am gone,"—and he took my mother's hand as he spoke. "I know you will not forsake her: you will be to her all that you have been to me, and God will bless you for it, my child,—if not on earth, yet in Heaven. You are my hope, my comfort, my sole dependance for her widowed years; and she loves you as a mother, Mary, though the name, alas! must ever be denied her."

Mary had dropped her head till it rested on my

father's hand, and I could hear that she sobbed aloud.

"You must not weep thus, my dearest child," exclaimed my father. "If these tears are for me, Mary, they are indeed in vain,—and if for *him*—for him whom I dare not name, though his image is in my head and in my heart,—for him who should now have knelt where you kneel, and done for me what you have done; if it is for him you weep, I cannot blame you, my child, but still I would say those tears must not be indulged. 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!' He has blighted your young hopes; he is bringing our grey hairs with sorrow to the grave; on earth we may never see him more. . . . . Yet I feel he will not finally be a castaway: we have committed him to One who is Almighty to save, and He *will* bring him to Himself at last,—and may we not trust to us . . . . in Heaven?"

"And why not here?" exclaimed Mary, suddenly raising her head. "He is merciful as well as mighty,—and who can say that He may not bring that lost one home to bless you even on earth,—to kneel where I kneel, and" . . . . . .

"All things are *possible*, Mary! . . . . and I will not deny that there have been times when such hopes dwelt in my mind; and I have thought the reality more than possible. It is strange," he added, after a moment's pause, "that even within the last hour, in that calm and quiet sleep, I fancied that he stood before me, and that I heard the long lost tones of his voice, and that I blessed him and loved him as in other times. But I woke, and it was but a dream, a blessed dream" . . . . . .

"And if it should not be a dream," said Mary Hamilton, starting to her feet,—"if this very day he should return to us, and confess all his guilt, and implore from you that pardon which God has granted him . . . . oh! would you not love him as in other days, and bless him as" . . . .

"Mary, my child, what do you mean?" exclaimed my mother, terrified at the wild energy of her manner.

"I mean," said Mary Hamilton, gently and solemnly raising her eyes to Heaven,—"I mean that God has heard our prayers, and that Edmund is returned to us."

I heard and saw no more. I started forward,—

here was a rush of blood to my temples, a swimming sensation in my eyes,—and when I came to myself I was stretched at my father's feet, and striving to exclaim in the words of the prodigal,—no other words could reach my case,—

"Father I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son!"

He held out his hand, while the other was closely pressed upon his brow,—he clasped me to his heart for a moment; and then rising, I sank upon my mother's breast, as if upon the point of rendering up existence there, where first I had received it.

My father spoke at length, in a voice so faint and low that it startled me.

"My son, I do not ask *how* you have returned to us. I do not speak, I will not think, of the past: I see you before me humble and penitent; I know that God has heard my prayer, and,—I am happy. Yet let me hear your voice again, my son,—that voice that has so long been silent: let it speak to me of rest and peace; let it tell me that our faith, our hope, is the same, and that we shall meet again in Heaven."

I forced myself to answer:

"My father! I am a Christian!—the vilest, the most unworthy, guilty of a thousand sins,—but yet a Christian,—adoring the God of my fathers,—trusting to that Saviour Whom once I set at nought,—loving Him for all He has done, for all He has forgiven, for all that I feel He will yet do for me!"

"My God, I thank Thee for this!"—exclaimed my father. "It is the last, the greatest blessing that I had prayed for on earth,—and now welcome death!—welcome the grave!—welcome that world where I may bless Thee for ever!" . . . . . .

He sank back for a moment,—then suddenly rising even to his feet, and gathering his remaining strength, while a faint glow passed over his features, and his eye seemed to look even into Heaven, he uttered his last earthly prayer to the God Whom he had served continually. He prayed for each of the beloved ones that surrounded him,—for her, the tender, faithful and beloved wife, whose love had cheered his labours, and lighted his darkest hours; for Mary, that angel being, who had soothed him in sorrow, nursed him in sickness, who had been to him as a daughter;—and lastly, and yet more fervently, for the poor-wanderer that had returned

to the fold,—that his sins might be washed away, that his wounded spirit might be healed, that he might remain stedfast in the faith, and that blessings might be poured on his head, for ever and ever!

He ceased to speak, but his eye remained fixed on the clear blue heavens: the glow passed from his features,—he fell gently backwards, and faintly murmuring, "To Thee, my Redeemer, I commend my soul!"—he expired without a groan.

He was gone,—and not a tear was shed, not a sigh was heard, not a sound was uttered; and yet to my mother it was the loss of all that made life dear,—and to me!—what was it not to me!—of the tenderest parent, the firmest friend, of the being to whom most on earth I owed veneration, and love, and gratitude,—and yet whom I had abandoned; whose last years I had embittered, whom I had returned only to see expire. But there was something so calm and holy in his death, so blessed in the expression of his countenance, that for him it was impossible to grieve,—and of ourselves we had not yet begun to think. We knelt, as we had done, at his feet,—we gazed, as before, on those pale features, where death had set his seal,

—and we thought rather of that bright world where his spirit had entered, than that we were indeed bereaved.

Oh! that the feeling of that hour could have been more lasting for me! And yet why do I say so? I had sinned, grievously sinned, and it was fitting that my life should be one of suffering. And for long and dreary years, day and night, was that scene of death continually present in my mind,—unsoftened by time,—unapproached by other griefs,—clear and vivid as reality itself, but with little of the comfort of the actual passing hour. My father grieving over the loss of his only son, sinking under the load of anxiety for him, tortured by the rumours of his crimes, and then at last sinking into the grave when for the first time in his existence that son might have been a blessing to him! . . . . the thought of these things could not have been borne, but for the certainty never quite lost sight of, that God has appointed all things justly, and wisely, and well,—but for the deep conviction of my father's blessedness, and the hope of meeting him once more where

"There is no parting and there are no tears."

For the first dreadful days that succeeded my

father's death, my excited and over-tortured spirit seemed to give way within me, and I fell into a kind of mental stupor. I was conscious, just conscious, of passing objects,—I knew that I was at home, and that in that home there was a dreary void, —I knew that I sat by my mother's side, and saw her tears unceasingly flow, that I sought mechanically to relieve her anguish,—I knew that she and I were both unspeakably miserable,—I was conscious too, that one most dearly loved continually flitted before me, now anxiously watching my countenance, now throwing her arms around my mother's neck and weeping upon her bosom, now speaking to her words, blessed words, of comfort;—but I merely knew these things,—I felt them not;—I could not sleep by night —I could not wake by day;—it was a dreamy half-existing state, in which past,—present,—future,— alike were not.

It passed at length; and the circumstance which brought me to myself was trivial, when compared with many which had utterly failed to rouse me The day of my father's funeral passed totally unmarked —the intimation that we must leave our long loved home,—the renewed agony of my mother in preparing

to quit for ever the scene of her lost happiness,—the many arrangements which such a removal entailed,—all passed unheeded. The day of departure arrived at last, and it chanced that I was left for a time alone in the room which we usually occupied, the only one that now remained untouched and peaceful: my eye wandered as usual heavily and carelessly from side to side, till at length it fell and fixed intently on the place which had always been called my father's seat, and the thought rose within me dimly at first, but becoming every moment more deep and vivid, "It is the last, last, time that my eye shall behold that spot,—that spot which is so full of *him*. My father's place, another shall fill,—my father's smile shall gladden our hearts no more,—my father's voice shall never again sound within these walls" . . . . . I rose, and gently approached the place fraught with so many recollections. I gazed on the little table piled with books which looked as if he had just left them,—upon the old arm-chair round which I had frolicked in joyous infancy with *his* eye fixed in tenderness upon me; by which I had knelt, and looking in *his* face, had lisped forth my first childish prayer; by which I had sat in my boyhood, and received instructions for

time and for eternity, and beside which, in later years, I had once more knelt, and, in the rashness and madness of my youth received from him a last and most undeserved blessing. The thousand recollections overwhelmed my spirit, and, sinking to the earth, I wept as I had not done since infancy. And as the tears flowed fast and freely, once more did reason and feeling resume their place within me. I was myself again,—and who may tell the agony of such a wakening! Nor was it the sufferings of the past alone that burst then on my wearied spirit: new griefs, new trials awaited me,—the present was all agony, and in the future—I dared not look.

It is true the scenes of my youth were yet around me, for we had removed only to the cottage which Mrs. Hamilton had formerly occupied,—and even, in all its bitterness, my heart yet throbbed with a feeling not altogether painful as I gazed upon those scenes: it is true my mother yet was spared me, and she loved me still with all a mother's tenderness. But Mary! my own forsaken, yet ever dearly loved!—she, whose image no guilt, no suffering, could ever tear from my heart,—she whose love alone could have brightened my pilgrimage, and made this earth aught

but a wilderness to me!—Mary—my adored Mary!—I looked upon her when the cloud had passed from my eye and from my mind, and how earnestly did I desire that cloud to return and hide the truth from me for ever! She was still beautiful,—as beautiful as when I first beheld her,—in that alone she was unchanged:—but even in her beauty there was no sign of that which had been; I could have thought at times that life itself had fled,—her cheek was so clear, so pale, and every feature hushed in such deep and death-like repose. And her eye, that once sparkling eye,—it was still bright as it had ever been, but there was something unearthly in its very brightness, and the expression never varied from that quiet, holy, heavenly serenity. Was there sin in desiring to see that expression removed, and the fire of youth and the glow of earthly feeling once more kindle her cheek, and sparkle in her eye? Was there sin in desiring to detain on earth a spirit which God had so purified for Himself? If it were so, long, long since has it passed away, and I have learnt to bow entirely to His will Who doeth all things well, and to acquiesce in the justice, the necessity, and the mercy, even of that blow which tore my heart-

strings asunder! But then I could not bend to the thought of losing *her;* I would not admit into my mind the idea of that coming trial which her appearance so strongly proclaimed; I fought against the horrible conviction that ever seemed floating around me,—but repelled again and again, it forced its way at last, and Mary's own lips first gave utterance to the truth.

We were continually together, and all had been spoken and all had been forgiven: we were together in the cares of earth, together (as once we had not been) in our hopes of Heaven, together in our sorrows, our consolations, our prayers,—and there came a day when, humbly and tremblingly, I ventured to speak of a future,—of hopes fulfilled,—of dreams accomplished . . . . . .

I spoke the feeling as it rose, and my words were received in silence. I looked into Mary's face, and stupidly gazed, as the colour went and came, and then ebbed entirely away.

"Is it to me you speak of earthly hopes, dear Edmund?" at length she said. "Is it with me you look for earthly happiness? Can you see this wasted frame, these weak and wearied limbs; can

you hear this struggling breath, and talk of this world's good to me?" She paused, and I did not attempt to answer her, for the shock her words produced was as overwhelming as if I had been wholly unprepared for that which she uttered.

She saw it, and her angel voice spoke again:—

"Dear Edmund, if it had been so,—if it had been the will of God that I should be your wife,—I might have been, we might have been, too blest. We are both perhaps too desirous of earthly happiness, too apt to rest our hopes on this world's joy. Perhaps, nay *surely*, it has been in mercy that even through sin and sorrow we have been taught our weakness, and led to look above. Dear Edmund," and she laid her hand on my arm, "we now have better hopes; let us think of them, and though here" . . . .

But I could listen no more, even to her: I rushed from the room, unable any longer to conceal the madness of my grief. It was *thus* then that the earthly nature was to be purified, the hopes cleaving still too fondly to the world were to be taught to soar above. Even in memory, that hour has a bitterness of agony over which time has had

no power, and Heaven itself perhaps alone can chase that bitterness away.

The trial was yet delayed. My mother had taken alarm at Mary's rapidly declining strength, and advice was procured, and remedies used, which for a time seemed effectual,—alas! but for a time! Other remedies were resorted to; and again our hopes rose, and again only to sink into deeper misery.

It was in one of these intervals of apparently returning health, that I implored Mary, as she valued my peace of mind for ever on this side the grave, to consent to our immediate union,—to invest me, were it but for a few short months, with a husband's right to watch over her, to soothe her sickness, and support her in all her sufferings. She hesitated at first to consent to my wishes,—she trembled lest any dearer tie should bind her more closely to a world which she felt must so soon pass from her eyes; but when she saw how deeply my happiness was involved in what I asked, her assent was no longer withheld: and in the house of mourning, surrounded by all the emblems of woe, were those vows spoken, and was that ceremony performed, which had once been looked to by both, as the day-star of all our happi-

ness. Darkness, and death, and misery now surrounded us on all sides; and yet through the gloom a ray of light seemed still to penetrate, and, almost unknown to myself, a feeling of hope gilded the hour.

The amendment upon which so much had been built, lasted only for the few remaining bright autumal days. Once or twice during those days, Mary walked to a little distance from home, and we looked together on the scenes where we had roamed side by side in all the freshness and freedom of youth; and then, at times, the smile, the bright smile, of happier hours, illumined her countenance, but never again did her gay laugh sound in my ears,—never again did the soft tones of her voice fill the air with harmony, or my heart with delight. She was still in the world, but not of the world; and when the winter blasts had confined her first to the house, and then to her room, and at last to the bed from which she never rose, the decline was so gradual, the passage between life and death so easy, that from day to day we could mark no change. Her heart was already in Heaven, while her languid frame still lay extended before us; and, without one

struggle, without one pang, the heavenly summons was received, and the blessed spirit flew to Him who gave it.

My mother survived yet many years these scenes of death and mourning; and the son who had caused her sufferings,—the son who had blighted her fond hopes, and brought desolation to her home,—that son was spared to cheer her latter days, and support her when life itself was failing. It has been,—it ever will be to me,—a source of unspeakable gratitude, that the opportunity was vouchsafed me of making some amends to one beloved parent, for the misery my sins had brought on her. Her remaining days were peaceful, if not happy; and when she too was gone to her last long home, and I remained alone on earth, the remembrance of those days, devoted exclusively to her, was among the few bright thoughts of the past on which memory could find a resting place.

My mother's death broke the last link that bound me to this world; for though Albert yet lived, and though from time to time I received accounts of his labours, and assurances of his never-failing affec-

tion, I yet knew that death alone could remove the barrier that divided us,—that never, while life remained, would he quit the post to which he had been called, and the work to which his energies were devoted.

The chain was broken for ever, and I have neither sought, nor wished to renew it.

"My hungry soul, which long hast fed
On idle fancies of thy foolish thought,
And with false beauties' flattering bait misled,
Hast after vain deceitful shadows sought,—
Which all are fled, and now have left thee nought
But late repentance through thy follies' grief;
Oh! cease to gaze on matter of thy grief.

And look, at last, up to that sovereign light,
From whose pure beams all perfect knowledge springs,
That kindleth love in every godly spright,
Even the love of God,—which loathing brings
Of this vile world, and these gay seeming things;
With whose sweet pleasures being so possest,
Thy straying thoughts henceforth for ever rest.

A TALE OF SECOND LOVE.

A TALE OF SECOND LOVE.

"Dare to be true."

GEORGE HERBERT.

Emma Perceval was nearly twenty; but she looked much younger. Our fancies have a habit of associating particular looks with particular ages, and we feel therefore surprised when the age and the look of the person to whom the age belongs are unsuited to our ideal fancy. In real life, many women of thirty are more fresh and youthful-looking than many girls of twenty; but, in spite of the conviction of the eye, fancy retains its hold, and there are few, I suppose, who, on being suddenly informed that some unknown individual is thirty, fail to conjure up the vision of a face from which much of the charm of youth is fled. And, more fancifully still, when we hear of twenty, we do, if I mistake not, picture something altogether different to that image of youth, freshness,

and innocence, which the mention of "sweet seventeen" brings before our eyes.

Emma Perceval was nearly twenty; but there was scarcely any age, however youthful, which might not, on a first acquaintance, have been assigned to her. Her figure was very slight,—her hair of that peculiar colour, fair and bright, which Spencer would have called yellow hair,—her complexion had not only the whiteness and freshness, but also the smoothness and roundness, of childhood; and the quiet smiles that played around her mouth wore an expression of child*like*, though not of child*ish* innocence. She was not by any means a perfect beauty; but at first she attracted you by her look of youth, and, after a short acquaintance, she attracted you afresh, because her ways and habits were in contrast to her appearance. With her light fairy-like figure, you would naturally have associated a merry laugh and a dancing step; you would have expected to hear her sing as she walked along; you would have watched to see her foremost in all youthful, even in all childish amusements: but such anticipations would have been disappointed in Emma Perceval. She smiled quietly and sweetly, but the

sound of her laugh was a thing almost unknown; her step was soft and light, but it had a stealing and lingering, not a buoyant tread; in the village church her voice was heard singing with full and birdlike tones, but it was heard there and there alone. When she went into society, which she did without reluctance, when necessity demanded her presence, her manners were kind, simple, gracious, and ready to be pleased; but there was no eagerness in her air: if sought and flattered, there was no consciousness,—if neglected and unamused, no distress. She remained like one apart,—serene, not sad,—composed, not grave,—retiring, and yet self-possessed.

And so it had been from the day of her first mingling in the society of the populous country neighbourhood round her home. Her calmness and backwardness had been early remarked; it had been admired by some, and lamented by others, and had been a matter of speculation and curiosity to all. By some it was laid to the charge of her youth and innocence; others suspected religious motives; others said it was no wonder, living, as she did, with a valitudinarian father, and an infirm grandmother, that she should have

caught something of their tranquil habits: none suspected, none could have suspected, the real cause, —an early, a very early, disappointment in love.

Such however was the truth. She had not reached her sixteenth birthday, when the state of her father's health drove him to spend some months in Italy. They travelled from place to place: Emma's youth, and her father's health, prevented them from entering much into society; but it did not prevent an acquaintance, which influenced Emma's destiny. During a sojourn of a few weeks at Florence, this acquaintance was casually made. The youth was barely twenty, handsome, engaging in manners, and glowing with poetry and romance. Circumstances, needless here to detail, threw the two young English people into close communication. For three weeks they met almost daily: they gazed together on the immortal works of art; they stood together in the beautiful churches, and listened together to the thrilling sounds of religious music; they walked together beneath the blue sky, inspired by the inspiration of the air; and there were moments more dangerous still, when alone,—alone even though many came and went around them,—they sat to-

gether in the soft still moonlight evening. They both, as many have done before them, lost their heads and lost their hearts. They talked romantic language, which sounded to them like perfect sense; and they pictured earth an Eden, through which they were to roam for ever hand in hand, with skies as blue, and airs as soft, as those that smiled upon and played around them. They were, in short, very young, and perhaps very foolish; but it did not seem so then.

The wakening came: Florence disagreed with Mr. Perceval, and the word was spoken—they must part. Then, looking on Emma's angel face, the impassioned youth declared that parting was impossible; and throwing himself almost on his knees before Mr. Perceval, he implored his consent to their immediate union. With speechless, but not unspeaking looks, Emma joined in the request. Mr. Perceval turned away his head from both to smile, then, looking gravely back, entered upon the consideration of the subject,—and entered upon it with a matter-of-fact air and judgment, which is very fatal to dreams of sentiment. "No consideration upon earth," he said, "should induce me to consent to such a pro-

position. I think it probable that in a few months you will both have forgotten the acquaintance of these last weeks . . . . . . " He was here interrupted by passionate protestations on the part of the youth, and by a look of silent reproach from Emma. But he begged to be allowed to be heard. "I repeat," he said, "that in a few months you will have probably forgotten each other; but if it should not be so, there is no harm done. You are too young to speak of vows and engagements: *I will have none.* You are both to go on your way as free as if you had never met; but if, after two or three years, you meet again, and it pleases you to reconsider the subject, I promise to reconsider it also." He spoke firmly and decidedly,—not one sound of wavering in his voice. There was nothing further therefore to be done but to submit. They separated,—Emma with silent tears and speechless sorrow, and vows of constancy in her looks not in her words,—the young man with passionate speeches, passionate entreaties, and more passionate promises, —such entreaties, such promises, as remained graven in Emma's heart. Shortly afterwards she returned to England.

The young man went on his way: he was on a tour for the improvement of his mind; and he continued his studies much in the way that he had begun them. His character was shallow and superficial, with some charm of youth and romance on the surface, some capability of being kindled and improved by exciting circumstances, but light, vain, trifling and frivolous beneath. In a few months Emma was not only forgotten, but replaced: in two years three Emmas at the least had been sole, and, as he imagined, permanent possessors of his heart; in two years and a half he was actually married to another, simply because, under circumstances similar to those which led to his love for Emma, no judicious friend had interposed to guard a youthful daughter from the dangers of a hasty attachment and inconsiderate marriage.

The news of this marriage reached Emma in her solitude. It did not break her heart,—it did not make her life miserable; but it left her, as it found her, sober, subdued, separated from the hopes and fears that fill the hearts of the young. On her, too, the influence of time and change of scene had told; and, had she suffered herself to do so, she too might

have forgotten the romantic dream of three weeks. But that which was the depth of her lover's nature was but the surface of hers; and, as a noble nature would, with thought, with vigilant care, even with prayers, she cherished her constancy. As the best gift that could be given her, she asked the gift of constancy. So the passing months, that passed over her head, fixed but more deeply this treasured memory in her heart. She reached the age of seventeen, and "came out,"—took her share, that is, in the society of her native county. There were a few balls in the course of the year, occasional dances, and some other merry-makings; and, to please her father, Emma joined in all that went forward: but to her the pretty words of Mrs. Hemans were applicable,—

> "And if she mingled with the festive train,
> It was but as some melancholy star
> Beholds the dance of shepherds on the plain,
> In its bright stillness present though afar."

She took her part outwardly; but inwardly, in the secret chamber of her heart, she was endeavouring to preserve one image unobscured. It *was* sometimes an endeavour: in the first novelty of excitement,

and admiration, and new acquaintances, she was occasionally betrayed into forgetfulness of the past, and into thoughts of present happiness; but such forgetfulness was in its first approach firmly resisted, and, after the first novelty was over, was entirely overcome. She was *determined* to be constant; and beneath her youthful look, and simple innocence of manner, there was a fund of resolution which never determined in vain.

Such then was the state of mind on which the news of her lover's inconstancy broke. It was, in fact, a far greater blow to her fancy, and to her moral feeling, than to her heart; but of this of course she was not herself aware. It was the destruction of a treasured memory, a bright ideal image, and a steadfast though shadowy hope. She did not mourn it with many tears: she gave herself up to no abandonment of sorrow; but that temper which she had cherished for his sake,—that separation of herself from common hopes and joys,—became the confirmed habit of her mind. She did not say to herself that she would never marry,—that it was impossible she could love again,—for she never considered the subject at all; but she felt that her hopes had been

blighted,—that for her the earth had lost its charm, —that

> "Something from her being's chain
> Was broke, not to be link'd again."

And henceforward she said she would seek and find happiness in doing her duty alone. So glided on her calm and equable existence. None had known of her love,—none knew of her disappointment,—no cloud settled on her brow,—no melancholy reflections were heard from her voice: simply in "bright stillness" she stood apart; the pageant show was nothing to her.

> "In vain the mirthful dance
> Its fairy figures weaves beneath her glance,—
> In vain the music's soft melodious thrill,—"

She heeds it not. She can admire,—she can smile, —but she does not share.

If we have fancies about ages, we have also fancies about months; and the character which our fancy bestows upon the month of May is one which we do not often see realized. It was, however, on a May evening, such as we fancy it,—that is, a perfect

summer evening,—that Emma, and her father, and her grandmother roamed out after dinner for an evening walk. Old Mrs. Perceval was infirm in body, but gay in mind, and far from infirm in tongue, and enjoyed life more keenly than her sickly son of fifty, or her blooming grand-daughter of nineteen. Mr. Perceval drew her along in a garden-chair; Emma walked by her side, and the old woman's enjoyment of the soft air, and her admiration of the springing flowers, enlivened, as it was wont to do, their way.

"I smell primroses, Emma," she exclaimed at last,—"wild primroses; don't tell me I am mistaken, for I know the smell as well as I know the month of May."

"You are quite right, Grandmamma; on the other side of this bank, in the public path, the primroses are growing like a carpet. Walker says he has not known such a year for primroses since . . . . I forget what he said, but he gave some very odd date, meaning about twenty years ago."

"Then, Emma my dear, you know what follows: if I smell primroses I must have them. You must climb over this bank, and come round and meet us at

the little gate. Get me a good bunch, there's a dear girl,—such as I can bury myself in; and now, Charles, drive on."

Emma climbed up the bank, and, with some little difficulty, scrambled down the opposite side. The public path, as it was called, was a path across Mr. Perceval's property, leading to and from the high road, which from time immemorial had been claimed by the neighbourhood in right of way. Satisfied with the claim, the right was rarely enforced, for it was but little shorter than the high road in point of distance, and from gates, styles, and other obstructions, was longer in point of time; still, as it was the public path, it was less frequented by Emma than other parts of the park and grounds. At this late hour, however, when perfect stillness reigned around, and when, lovely as the evening was, the chief part of the tired cottagers were already thinking of repose, there was little fear of intrusion; and the thought of its being the public path escaped her memory as soon almost as the words were said. The banks and hedge on one side of the path, and the smooth green grass on the other, were literally sown with primroses; they lay on the ground as thick as the

morning dew. All who have picked up shells and pebbles, or gathered wild flowers, violets, cowslips, and primroses, are well aware of the exciting nature of the occupation; even the listless and indifferent feel themselves aroused as by some powerful stimulant. Emma, though alone, and, as usual, calm and quiet in outward show, became completely absorbed. She climbed the banks,—she thrust her small ungloved hand into the hedges,—finally, in her excitement, she lost the bonnet and shawl she had carelessly thrown on, and unconsciously stood in the public path in her evening dress. This dress was quiet, but pretty and picturesque,—a white gown of spotted muslin, fastening at the throat,—a sash of pink ribbon,—and a fall of black lace, placed at the back of her head, appearing to contain the castaway curls of her golden hair.

She was kneeling on a carpet of primroses, at the foot of a bank yellow with tufts, a bunch of gigantic size enclosed in her small fingers while she hastily gathered more,—when a voice of peculiar tone, such a voice as Tennyson describes by the words "deep chested music" fell upon her ear.

"I beg ten thousand pardons, but I have not

seen such a bunch of primroses these five and twenty years."

Voice and manner are much: had the appearance of the owner of the voice been other than it was, the voice and manner would have assured at once that no impudence, no impertinence was meant,—that he spoke from a simple impulse, because he could not help speaking.

The appearance, however, was in harmony with the voice. He looked like a gentleman; but he looked so from the unpretending simplicity of his manner, and the kind of civilized roughness of his dress,—(such a dress, I mean, as makes a gentlemen look more like a gentleman, but which none but a gentleman can wear with impunity)—not from any other cause. He was not very young, and his sunburnt complexion spoke of the wear and tear of life; but his figure was tall and commanding, and the bronzed hues of his face rather set off than otherwise the brilliancy of his dark eyes, and the light of his smile.

"On his bold visage middle age
Had lightly set his signet sage,
But had not quenched the open truth
And fiery vehemence of youth."

Altogether he looked as if he was somebody,—by which I do not mean prince or peer in disguise, but as if he had a strong individual character, which made him himself and nobody else.

At the first sound of the voice Emma had started, but, before it ceased, assured that it did not mean the only thing that might have startled and alarmed her,—impertinence,—she rose from her kneeling posture, and, turning to him with a smile, held out the bunch of primroses.

The stranger stooped and smelt it. "A thousand thanks," he then said, in the same deep toned voice. "I feel I should make some great apology for having run the chance of alarming you, but I can only say, in excuse, I could not help it; and that, I fear, is a poor one. And now, good evening," and he took off his hat as he spoke.

"Since you admire them, will you not have the primroses?" Emma said quietly. "I can get another bunch in a moment, as you see,"—and she glanced at the abundant show around them.

"If I do not rob you, I should like nothing better." And he held out his hand.

But his large unaccustomed fingers failed to hold

what Emma's small and slender ones enclosed so neatly. The bunch separated, and several primroses fell to the ground.

"I will arrange it in a moment," Emma said; and hastily loosening a pink ribbon from her wrist, she proceeded to tie up the bunch.

The stranger contemplated her with a peculiar expression of countenance. Her youthful grace many might have had,—though she did look peculiarly lovely from the circumstances of her appearance, and from a bright ray of setting sun which streamed at the moment on her white dress and her golden hair; still her share of beauty was no very uncommon gift,—but few could have stood with such natural ease, such quiet self-possession,—such perfect unconsciousness,—not even a shade of heightened colour on her cheek, betraying a fear or idea that she was doing an uncommon thing.

The stranger seemed to read her perfectly, and did homage to her unconsciousness by restraining his eye from the lightest glance of admiration, and his lips from the simplest expression of flattery or compliment.

He received the decorated bunch with the sim-

plicity with which it was given, and, bowing, merely said,—using again a phrase that seemed to come naturally to his lips,—"A thousand thanks. You have given me a great pleasure. I wish you good night."

He walked rapidly on, nor cast one glance behind him; and Emma turned again to her occupation. As she turned, her eye fell on her bonnet and shawl; and then only she became conscious that she had been without them. The sight caused a smile, not a blush, and, as she replaced them, a soliloquy,—"I suppose it did not look very odd, as I am so near home;" and she thought of it no more.

On rejoining her father and grandmother, she explained the length of her absence by relating what had occurred,—but related it in so natural and unromancing a manner, that it appeared to them the same every-day occurrence it did to her.

Four or five days afterwards, as Emma was reading to her grandmother, a servant entered the drawing-room with a tray and a card upon it. He carried it to Emma, and said the gentleman had enquired if Miss Perceval was at home, and would see him. Emma glanced at the card:

it bore the name of "Colonel Aquilar," and nothing more.

"Colonel Aquilar, grandmamma!" she exclaimed,—"Who is that?" and she placed the card before her grandmother.

"An impostor I should think, my dear Emma," was the old woman's reply, after inspecting the card for some minutes.

"An impostor, grandmamma!" Emma, said, smiling, "why should it be an impostor? What sort of a person is it, James?" she enquired of the old servant."

"I never saw him before, Ma'am; but he looks quite like a gentleman."

"Many impostors look like gentlemen," Mrs. Perceval observed emphatically. "Aquilar!—such a name; it sounds exactly like a Spanish refugee. You had better tell him, James, that Miss Perceval will thank him to write his business."

The servant left the room, and shortly returned with the card and tray as before. On the card was written, "Colonel Aquilar has called to thank Miss Perceval."

"I think, grandmamma, we had better let him

come in," Emma said, after glancing at it. "It must be somebody we know."

"Very well, Emma, as you will: I remember that a friend of mine once received a stranger in this way,—a person with a name very like Aquilar,—some Pole or Spaniard, a rebel or refugee in short, and he put his back against the door and refused to leave the room without a five-pound note."

"James must take care of us," said Emma, smiling." It may be somebody that we should be sorry to treat uncivilly." And glancing decidedly at the servant, he again left the room, and returned with the visitor.

"Oh! grandmamma," she exclaimed, in a low voice, as he entered, "it is the person who took the primroses the other night. How stupid I was not to think of it."

The stranger came towards her. "I am afraid I may be doing an out-of-the-way thing," he said in his deep voice, and with his simple but not ungraceful manner; "but if it is so, I must ask you to forgive me, and to believe that it is ignorance, not intention, that offends."

Emma smiled, and, as she pushed a chair towards

him, said without awkwarkness, and with a movement towards her grandmother, "We were puzzled by your name, as it is a strange one in these parts, but I have just told grandmamma that I had met you before."

Colonel Aquilar bowed low to Mrs. Perceval, and she began to lose her first idea of his being an inpostor, and her second that the person who had taken the primroses must have been an highwayman.

She returned his bow with stately politeness, and began to apologise more than enough for her precaution in requesting him to write his business. "One cannot be too careful," she concluded,—"Impostors are very common in these days, indeed in all days. I was just telling my grand-daughter a curious circumstance that happened to a friend of mine;—she admitted a strange gentleman into her drawing-room, and he immediately placed his back against the door and refused to leave her without a five-pound note."

"I commend your discretion, Madam," said Colonel Aquilar, a scarcely-perceptible smile playing over his lips,—"it is a quality that cannot be too much enforced; but I must also commend Miss Perceval's benevolence, in rejecting suspicion even under suspi-

cious circumstances. I called to thank you," he continued, turning to Emma, his manner losing the slight formality with which he had addressed Mrs. Perceval, "for your kindness to me on Friday last, and also to apologize for conduct which, after consideration, told me was unjustifiable."

"Indeed I don't think so," Emma said, smiling. "Do you, Grandmamma? it was very natural."

"Very natural, my dear Emma; but still one cannot be too careful. As it was, Colonel Aquilar, it was very right and proper; but if it had been an impostor or a highwayman, I could not say the same."

"Are you fond of flowers?" Emma enquired of her guest.

"No, not fond of flowers in general, only a very few. I like snowdrops in the winter, and primroses in the spring, and roses in the summer, and then I have done."

"There must be tales about these flowers," said old Mrs. Perceval, gaily shaking her head.

"There are, Madam, many tales. I care about few things now, but I could go a thousand miles for the scent of those flowers, which carry me back to the happy days of my childhood."

"You are too young, Sir, to talk so sentimentally about your childhood; when you come to my age it will be time enough."

"I am six-and-thirty, Madam; and at six-and-thirty one begins to look back rather than forward."

"And yet, Sir, six-and-thirty is a pleasant age. I remember it well; and I look back upon it as among the happy days of my youth, before age, though a happy age, had begun to cast its shadows upon me."

"It may be so," said their guest,—an expression of melancholy, not untinged with bitterness, clouding his countenance. "Youth and age is very much a matter of will and character. Some men grow old betimes. I lost my youth at three-and-twenty, and never have found it again. I may therefore justly look on myself as far advanced in life."

Pleased with her guest,—pleased with her own superior youthfulness,—above all, pleased with a new acquaintance, and one not undisposed to listen to her,—old Mrs. Perceval talked on, satisfied and encouraged by the civil replies she met.

Emma said now and then a few words, and that was all, but Colonel Aquilar was not inclined to quarrel with her silence; he liked to hear her speak,

for her voice was sweet, and she said just what he expected she would say: but it rather interfered with his enjoyment than otherwise, for then she raised her eyes from her work,—and he would not that those clear calm eyes should meet the fixed gaze with which he contemplated her countenance.

At last he rose from his seat with a quick movement, either from a sudden remembrance, or sudden effort. He then drew nearer to Emma.

"I am on a visit," he said, with a little formality, "to Sir Henry Freeling, with whom I believe you are acquainted; business took me there, and business will probably force me to return several times in the course of the next half-year:" he paused and looked at her.

She read his wish in his countenance, and said, with kind and quiet graciousness, "Then I hope we shall see you again." Her self-possession, though in fact, only natural to one who almost all her life had played the hostess, yet certainly sat a little strangely on the extreme youthfulness of her appearance.

"Thank you," he replied warmly, and his formality was gone; "it was an invitation which I was wishing

to receive, yet not daring to ask. I hope, Madam," turning to Mrs. Perceval, "it has your sanction."

"Emma would not have given it," she said, a little statelily, "if it had been otherwise."

"I meant," he said,—and the slight smile played over his countenance again,"—that I hoped you were satisfied I was neither an impostor nor an highwayman."

"I don't know, indeed, "she replied, smiling graciously, "but I hope a future acquaintance will give me an opportunity of deciding the point."

He made no attempt to shake hands, but bowed to each lady,—not a common bow,—a bow learnt in an old-fashioned school,—and withdrew.

The consideration of the various degrees, merits, and possibilities of first and second love, have excited the powers of many poets; and very contradictory opinions on the subject have been given. Here is one which, though in rather highflown language, has no doubt occasionally its truth:

"Oft first love must perish
Like the pale snowdrop,—boyish love of spring,—
Born pale, to die and strew the path of triumph

Before the imperial glowing of the rose,
Whose passion conquers all."

Another, and a commoner opinion, is that expressed in the calmer but far more beautiful verses of Crabbe:

" Then bliss ensued so exquisitely sweet,
That with it once, once only we can meet;
For though we love again, and though once more
We feel the enlivening hope we felt before,—
Still the pure freshness of the joy that cast
Its sweet around us, is for ever passed."

The question is one which, on a large scale, can probably never be decided,—character and circumstance giving it a distinctive form in every individual.

The subject, as a definite question, had never presented itself to the mind of Emma Perceval. Love no longer made an object in her tranquil view of life,—no circumstances had made its consideration necessary; yet had her opinion suddenly been asked, the cast of her mind would have prompted her to give her acquiescence to the declaration of Crabbe; or, rather going beyond it, she would have said, that once to love was enough. The temper which her early love and early disappointment had cherished,

while it deepened, had calmed her feelings; and neither wandering wishes, nor vague desires disturbed the even tenour of her thoughts. Constant she had no longer a right to be, but her youthful experience had taught her to prize truth and constancy above all other virtues, and the fruits of her opinion were visible in her retired demeanour, and absorbed air.

But the time was approaching, when the shadow of love was to cross her path again; and it came so naturally that it scarcely startled her when it came.

During the course of two or three months, Emma and Colonel Aquilar met, not constantly but occasionally,—sufficiently often to excite interest in those inclined to be interested,—not so often as to bring that interest to any rapid conclusion. Colonel Aquilar's interest in Emma began from the first moment of their acquaintance: her youth, her innocence, her childlike unconsciousness, had a charm for him which needed no beauty to recommend it; and there was that in Colonel Aquilar,—in addition to a simplicity and straightforwardness of manner, that had its peculiar attraction,—which, once drawn to observe him, could not fail to excite the interest of one in Emma's circumstances.

All minds are not attracted by a character tinged with gloom. To the very young and thoughtless it is painful, because it forces on their attention the unwelcome idea, that life is not all happiness. To those who have suffered very deeply it is, from something of the same cause, oppressive: they know too well what life is, to need the teaching of such a sight,—their fancy needs no such help to picture misery; a breath from the fragrance of joyous youth is the breath that brings refreshment to their spirits. But there is a class of minds for which it has an intense and peculiar attraction, —those whose imaginations have suffered rather than their hearts,—those whose hopes have been, not shattered and crushed, but shadowed or disappointed,—those who know what sorrow is, without having deeply tasted of its misery. To such as these, a something of bitterness in the language, a something of gloom on the brow, has an inexpressible charm; they fancy they know not what, but with that vague fancy they feel a deep and thrilling sympathy.

It was so with Emma Perceval. She saw Colonel Aquilar, kind and generous in all his actions,—she heard him true and lofty-minded in all his sentiments:

for these things she admired his character; but that which drew her to observe, and called forth her interest, was the gloomy brow often at war with his words,—the bitter words often at war with his actions. He had suffered, and the suffering had left ineffaceable traces behind; and how, she asked, had it been, and from what cause had suffering come.

So, in the watchful interest excited by a mystery which nothing discovered, her heart unconsciously was won.

This is not to be a long story; the beginning has been related, and the conclusion is to come: the intermediate parts,—the progress of the acquaintance, —the dawn and growth of interest in Emma's mind, —the love of Colonel Aquilar, taking possession of every thought and faculty of his being;—these I leave to the fertile imaginations of my readers.

There had probably been from the beginning an insensible something in Colonel Aquilar's manner, which drew Emma's attention towards him; but he was not, what would have commonly been called, *attentive* to her. It was a peculiarity of his mind, to shrink from making her, who was the object of his attention, an object of attention to others.

Partly by nature, partly by circumstances, he was jealous. There were many evenings on which he preferred to deny himself the pleasure of Emma's society, rather than expose her to comment or scrutiny. Nay, so jealous was he, that he was jealous of his own self. He shrank himself from disturbing the calm freshness of her brow, the childlike serenity of her soul. He shrank from speaking the words, which yet, would he win her for his own, must be spoken, lest he himself should destroy that which most he loved. So still he lingered on, and, strange as it may seem, had watched with joy the long-continued unconsciousness of her manner,—had felt with joy his fears of her indifference.

It was three months after their first acquaintance, that Emma went with her father to pay a visit of two days' length to a lady in the neighbourhood. Colonel Aquilar was among the guests.

Perhaps he felt that time was passing on, and that others might step in and win his treasured prize; perhaps self-controul for two entire days was more than he could practise; perhaps Emma, in the midst of a large party, where there were many young and noisy, some young and silly, some trifling and

vain,—perhaps her bright stillness, her retired grace, stood in too strong contrast with others,—too powerfully affected his mind and resolution; but so it was, that then and there his manner began to change, his feelings to declare themselves.

The first day was marked by the dawn of consciousness in Emma's mind. For many weeks, life had been assuming new colours in her eyes,—the calm grey expanse, tranquil yet sunless, which so long had lay before her, had been catching soft rainbow tints of hope and joy. She had felt it, without pausing to analyze,—she acknowledged it now, and in the acknowledgment, so bright seemed the present, so bright the future, that the past was almost forgotten. Too true and noble minded to trifle with herself, she acknowledged that she loved again, and better, far better, than before. How it could be so, was a little strange, but she had not time to question herself then, to search all the depths of her heart; the excitement of the moment forbade it: she did but own, that on his lips her hopes of future happiness hung,—that the hope of healing the wounds that had been made, of chasing the gloom from his brow, was now the dearest hope of her life.

The second day was marked by another discovery. At luncheon, some discussion arose as to the arrangements for the afternoon. Colonel Aquilar, though less guarded towards Emma herself, was equally sedulous as he had hitherto been, to preserve her from idle scrutiny, idle looks, and idle jests: far therefore from making her movements his apparent care, he suffered things to take their common course; and receiving from a lady an invitation to join her in some excursion on horseback, he accepted it without hesitation. As if (with more consciousness of his feelings than others) she had waited until *his* fate was decided, Emma's hostess, who was strongly attached to her, then put in her claim for her society during the afternoon.

All left the house in their different ways, and shortly after leaving it, all were driven back by a thunder storm. Emma and her hostess were the first to return. The rain fell in torrents; the sky was still threatening: the carriage was sent away, and they sat down at one end of a long drawing-room, to work and to wait.

Shortly afterwards the riding party returned. They were talking eagerly as they entered the room,

and, apparently, were interested by their subject; for, instead of crossing the room, they placed themselves in a kind of recess at the further end, and, while watching the darkening sky, and occasionally commenting on the prospects for the afternoon, the conversation proceeded.

Several sentences, indistinctly spoken by several speakers, were imperfectly heard by Emma and her companion; but the lady's eager voice, drowning another which was attempting to make itself heard, arrested their attention.

"You provoke me, Mr. Villiers. If a man is convinced that he has excited a true attachment, what would he have more: how can it affect his happiness, that he is not the *first* to excite such a feeling in the mind? I have no patience with such a selfish idea."

"I see no selfishness in the desire," said the deep voice of Colonel Aquilar, for the first time joining in the conversation. "All men have their peculiar wishes and feelings; and, so as no other person is injured by their indulgence, they may surely, without selfishness, be indulged. If a man could submit to accept the attachment of a worn and wasted heart, he

would possibly be as happy, nay happier, than a more fastidious being; but *I could not be that man.* Many, in such circumstances, may be lovely, amiable, estimable,—I do not deny it; but they would not be so for me. There is but one gift I can fancy a man anxious to possess,—a first fresh love: if he had not that, all other gifts would be valueless."

There was one who, with breathless interest, was hanging on his words. The conversation proceeded, but it reached her no more. The beating of her own heart was all the sound she heard.

From a painful, agitating tumult of feeling,—yet a tumult which left her pale, still, and immovable to outward appearance,—she was roused by the voice of her companion.

"Colonel Aquilar speaks strongly and strangely," she said, "I am sure it must seem so to you; and I should attempt to answer him myself, if I had not already attempted it and failed. He is a sensible man on most points, the very last I should suspect of strange follies and fancies; and yet on this subject I look upon him as scarcely sane."

"Is there any cause for his opinion?" Emma forced herself to ask, and asked without apparent emotion.

"There is indeed," the lady said, shaking her head. "I do not know all the particulars of his history, but I know that he has suffered two disappointments, and both times from this cause, a previous attachment. The first time was in his very early youth. He was on the verge of marriage, and was, I believe, deeply and sincerely attached: he was overthrown at the last moment, with peculiarly aggravating circumstances, by the re-appearance of a former lover. I was told that he brooded so much over the deception—(deception he fancied it was, though I do not know that it was so really)—that he had a serious illness in consequence. The second time, was about seven years ago. Matters had not gone so far, and, perhaps, had he not previously suffered his mind to dwell on the subject, it might not have affected him; but something of the same kind, though in a lighter form, occurred, and it renewed and deepened the former impression. He has been a melancholy man since then, with a shade of suspicion in his temper." She paused for a few moments, then added, "I hope when next he fixes his heart, he will fix it so wisely, that not even the shadow of such a disappointment will await him.

Fanciful as he may be, and though no longer so young as might be desired, I will say this,—that a first fresh love is no more than his deserts.

Emma did not raise her eyes; but there was a smile in the voice, a tone of kind meaning, which she easily understood. Colonel Aquilar's feelings had been read by others besides herself; by others besides him had her circumstances also been misunderstood. She was looked upon as one capable of giving a first fresh love,—as one who never had been any thing but "fancy free."

Long habits of self-controul and self-command kept her perfectly still. The rain continued, and they were shortly joined by the party from the window, and a conversation was kept up with great liveliness, and Emma smiled as others did; but all the while, beneath the calm surface, troubled, agitating, perplexing thoughts were rising and swelling; nor were they calmed and assisted by Colonel Aquilar's appearance. As if the tone of the conversation had aroused painful and slumbering remembrances, he sat apart, in gloomy silence. Occasionally, when Emma was called upon to speak, she raised her eyes, and saw his knit brows and compressed lips; but she

observed also that, each time her glance met his, the gloom disappeared, and the compressed muscles relaxed into a look of gentleness. She saw it, and it added to the perplexity of her ponderings.

But it was not long before, from the tumult of her thoughts, one thought arose, clear and distinct. He should learn, before it was too late, that she was not what he imagined her to be; and from whom could he hear it but from herself? She would not wait till he loved her more, till the pang of resigning her might overcome his cherished fancies; but she would save him from the disappointment that seemed to be awaiting him ere it was too late. Youth and innocence can fearlessly perform acts from which the more experienced and worldly-minded might shrink. Once clearly perceiving the necessity, she had no doubts as to the duty,—no more perplexity, except as to the manner of performing it. And, wrapt in thoughts of him, and grieving for him, her generous nature allowed no thoughts of regret to herself; nor was it then that she paused to remark how the soft rainbow tints were fading from the earth,—how the expanse before her was returning to a soberer and darker grey.

When once our minds are made up as to the duty of any particular course of action, it is remarkable how soon the opportunity for carrying it into effect is presented to us. All must have observed this,—all too must have observed that "occasions lost go in anger:" if timidity or any other wilful cause prevent our using the occasion that is offered, it is long and long before it returns to us again. But this is not to the purpose now.

Having made up her mind as to her duty, Emma was almost startled to find how quickly the opportunity came.

The rain was over at last, and many followed the first intentions of the afternoon, but Emma's hostess was afraid of the damp; and Emma, only too happy to be released from the society of the pony-carriage, left to thought and solitude, wandered out alone.

The sky had cleared, bright and blue as if a cloud had never dimmed it,—the sun shone out brilliantly,—the birds began to sing, and the flowers, refreshed by the rain, lifted up their heads, and shed their perfume around: it was a lovely July evening. Emma sat down in a summer-house, into which the rain had not penetrated, but round which the dewy

flowers were gracefully creeping. Not however to enjoy the lovely evening, not to scent the flowers, was she sitting there, but deep in thought, with downcast eyes, and her hands folded on her knee, to ponder on the necessity before her.

She was roused by a step at her side, and Colonel Aquilar stood before her.

She looked up, and blushed deeply. He had stood and gazed upon her for many minutes before he had determined to approach; and now he saw her blush with a beating heart. She was not given to blush: the feeling which made her stand aside in life, so calm, so tranquil, had prevented that ebb and flow of feeling, those sudden rushes of joy and fear, and hope and excitement, which dye the checks, and sparkle in the eyes; and he had adored her for her tranquility. He once had loved a fair young creature, whose cheek had borne witness to every passing emotion within her, and she had deceived him; in clear, unbroken, childlike serenity, now only he dreamed that innocence was to be found. Yet that she, so calm, so still to others, hitherto so still to himself, should blush at his approach . . . . . . it was a sign to make his heart beat high with hope and joy."

"I beg your pardon," he said, "I fear I have startled you."

She shook her head, with a slight smile.

"You were so deep in thought, I have been watching you. Do not think I dare to ask,—I am not so impertinent; but I confess I have been wondering what could engage so deeply the thoughts of one as young as you."

Emma's heart beat: the very moment for confession seemed presented to her, yet she felt unequal thus suddenly to perform her task. "I am not so very young," she said. "I am nearly twenty."

"It is a great age,"—and he looked at her with a smile,—"and I confess I should hardly have thought you had attained it. But life in peace, and quiet, and innocence, passes over our heads, and leaves few traces behind,—*our* heads I said,—I should rather have said over the heads of those who are so happy as to live in innocence and peace."

"We cannot judge of others," Emma said, and her voice was low and trembling. "The calmest life has often trials of its own."

"Have you, too, known trial?—you, so fresh, and pure, and formed to be happy:" and he stooped

down towards her, and his deep tones were tender and compassionate.

"I have," she replied faintly, and her downcast lashes trembled.

He took her hand with the tenderness of a father, and in the same soft voice murmured, "How could I dare to ask that question, when I know that you are motherless. I too know what it is to lose a mother."

"My mother!" Emma said with agitation, "I did not speak of her; I have lost her indeed, but it was a loss I never knew. She died the day of my birth."

He let go her hand, and stood before her in silence.

"There may be other trials," Emma said at last, and the excess of her agitation made her calm.

"There may," was the deep and stern reply; and again there was silence.

He stood before her, his whole soul in the gaze that sought to read her countenance; and she, as a guilty thing, with downcast eye and a changing colour, bent beneath his glance.

"What trials are those you have known?" he

asked at length; and his voice was husky from emotion. He had no right so peremptorily to enquire; but of that he thought not.

Her head bent lower, and her colour rose deeper; but she made no answer.

"What trials have you known?" he repeated; and this time his tones were harsh.

She drew a deep breath, then answered steadily, "I have known the sorrow of a false trust, and a blighted hope."

Her eyes were still downcast, and she did not see the spasm of convulsive agitation that passed over his countenance. Another silence followed his words, and then he spoke, calmly indeed, but a world of sorrow and bitterness in their calm.

"It is my destiny,—no doubt, from some inscrutable cause, a just one,—I bow to it; but that *you* too should have deceived me, *you* who looked as if fresh from the hands of God,—I could not have thought it: henceforward love is past, and trust in mortal man is vain."

As he ceased to speak he left her.

Emma went down to dinner as usual, and her heart sank as she observed that Colonel Aquilar was

not there. But she had done right; she had no doubts, no fears, and, though sad, she was still.

He was not gone however: after a moment enquiries were made for him, and a servant replied that he had returned home very late. They proceeded to the dining-room without him. Some minutes still elapsed before he appeared, and then his gloomy and contracted brow proclaimed the unabated fever and agitation of his mind. All perceived it; but he was not a man to be questioned, and his muttered apology was received in silence.

The place that had been left for him was exactly opposite to Emma. She was dressed that night entirely in white, and her cheek was almost as white as her dress; but there was a look in her paleness, and in her drooping lashes, that made her unusually lovely. She looked as white, as pure, as still, as the evening star. *Deception* was no word to associate with her.

For a time Colonel Aquilar avoided even a glance; but when once one hurried glance had been taken, the fascination returned: he was forced to gaze, and gaze again, and with every succeeding gaze the gloom faded from his brow, the contraction from

his lips, and, though sadder than usual, he was himself again.

When he entered the drawing-room, he remained for a time uncertain and at a distance. His whole soul was upon her; yet some feeling almost as strong seemed to withhold him from her. *Almost* as strong, —the attraction weighed, though but a little, heaviest in the balance, and at length he was at her side.

She was seated at a short distance from her hostess, and was engaged with her work. He drew a chair a little behind her and sat down. A slight tremulous movement of her hand shewed her consciousness of his presence, but she neither raised her eyes nor addressed him.

"Can you forgive me?" he said, bending towards her, and speaking in so low a voice it could reach no ears but hers. "I know I spoke strangely to you to-day: you must have thought me mad; and I was so, —or if not mad, worse. I had no right, it was unpardonable insolence. Yet, though unpardonable, forgive me,—I *must* be forgiven."

"If it needs it, I do," she said, tremulously.

"You are an angel." The words burst passionately from his lips,—and then he was silent again.

"Have you learned my history?" he inquired after a long pause.

"I have this day," she replied, still without turning towards him, or raising her eyes from her employment.

"And you felt for me?"

"If I am not disturbing Miss Perceval," a lady called, who sat with Mr. Perceval on the opposite side of the fire, "I must ask her to play those beautiful airs from 'Le Prophètè,' which she played last night. 'Pietà Pietà,' if I might be allowed to choose.'"

"Go and play, Emma," her father said shortly and peremptorily.

She laid down her work, got up with her usual quiet obedience, and went to the pianoforte without a glance at Colonel Aquilar. Several gentlemen sprang forward to assist her in finding her music, and arranging her candles; but she was a little more silen than usual, a little more resolute in refusing unnecessary attention, and, after standing over her for a moment, they returned to their seats.

She played always with deep feeling, and this night more so even than usual. The beautiful notes

of the beautiful air were enough to appeal to any heart. Colonel Aquilar sprang from his seat and approached her again.

"Miss Perceval," he said, bending down, and speaking in his tones of deep emotion, "did you hear my words this afternoon? had you a *purpose* in what you said to me?"

"I had," she murmured faintly.

"Had you seen that you were become my life, that my whole being was centered upon you,—that with the hope of you, earth was becoming to me a paradise again?"

"I feared it," she said, so low and tremulously, even he but faintly gathered up her words, "and I would have warned you that it was in vain."

"In vain,—is it in vain?

She looked up for an instant with silent enquiry, then blushed deeply, and looked down again.

"My dear Emma!" exclaimed her rather sleepy and unsuspecting father, "did you not hear Lady Freeling ask you to play?"

She hastily turned over the leaves, and began again; and if the first bars were a little disordered and discordant, she might be excused for her inat-

tention, for soft, and low, and earnestly these words were falling on her ear—

"Oh! not in vain for me. Freshness is good, but Emma, dearest Emma, *Truth* is far better."

POEMS.

THE YOUNG QUEEN.

A TALE FOR THE YOUNG.

INTRODUCTION.

Stately and slow along the street
    The heralds ride, and call
Warrior chief and lord to meet,
With homage their young Queen to greet
    Within her palace hall.
Dead is her father and their king,
    And she is called to be,
Although so soft and frail a thing,
Scarce twice three summers reckoning,
    The Queen of Sicily.

Through daring deeds her father came
To bear his proud and kingly name;
But, once attained his heart's desire,
Seemed in him evil to expire:

So wisely ruled, so gently shed
His blessings on his people's head,
That, one by one, their hearts are bound
In loyal links his throne around ;
And, one by one, with homage meet,
They bow before th' usurper's feet.

Meanwhile the rightful heir
    Lingers in foreign land,—
An exiled monarch's only care,—
    Born on a foreign strand.
He ne'er has seen that blooming shore,
    Hears not his father's tongue ;
The spring of youth is passing o'er,
    Strange citizens among.

But, suddenly, the rumour flies
The dreaded warrior-monarch dies.
It reaches him where, far away,
He waits the dawn of such a day.
An infant Queen is on the throne,
And he again may claim his own ;
Nor think it hard her childish eye
To turn from dazzling majesty.

PART I.

The day is come,—the youthful Queen
Upon her royal throne is seen;
The officers of state stand round:
Nobles, yea princes, there are found,
With glittering arms, in gorgeous dress,
But she in mourning simpleness.

A robe of black her form flows down;
And, save her jewelled belt and crown,
Her childish bloom, and high-born mien,
In unadorned grace are seen.

Though born beneath the sunny sky
Of passion-breathing Italy,
Her cheek is white as mountain snow;
  And her blue eyes, so large and fair,
A purity and sweetness show,
  That speaks a spirit still and clear.
Upon her cheek the blushes come,
Soft as reflected rose-leaf's bloom;

And, though half-sad her brow to-day,
  Yet still the gentle child,
While wonder swept her grief away,
Looked round, so innocent and gay,
  That e'en the sternest smiled.

She stands before her throne,
  A crown upon her brow;
And, lightly waving down,
  Her golden ringlets flow.
She stands from morn till even,—
  Her subjects passing by;
To every one her hand is given
  With infant majesty.
They bow the knee,—their faith they plight,—
Then kiss that hand,—so soft and light
Her mailed warriors fear to press,
And marvel o'er its feebleness.

Amid the throng that gazed upon the Queen,
'Mid glare of arms and jewels' dazzling sheen,
  One unknown knight stood, silent and retired;
Yet, spite of nameless rank and garb less gay,
Upon his form unnumbered glances stray,
  With secret awe inspired.

The simple grace in every movement seen,—
    The mournful lustre of his deep black eye,—
The lofty bearing of his outward mien,—
    Stately yet sad,—a pensive majesty;
This draws the eyes of all, and, unconfessed,
Wakes thoughts of homage in each silent breast.

He gazed upon the Queen with earnest eye,
    As though he sought to read
The secrets of a dark futurity
    In the void above her head,—
As though he sought to pierce the deep
    Of her young spirit's rest,
And wake the countless thoughts that sleep
      Unconscious in her breast.

" Image of purity!" at length he said, and sighed,
    " In all the world have I seen nought like thee:
" I will not chase thee from thy home of pride;
    " Thine these fair halls,—this fairer land shall be.
" Thou wilt rule well,—no worldly dream
" Will ever shade those pure eyes' beam,
" Nor passion rise, nor haughty ire,
" To work with desolating fire.

" I feel, I feel, thy better heart,
  " And yield to thee my rightful due . . .
" Yet I in thee will bear a part;
  " Be thou my guardian angel too."

This thought passed swiftly through his breast;
Then swiftly through the crowd he prest,
And stood before her throne to pay
His homage, bending low as they.

Calmly to her he bowed the knee,
  And kissed her tiny hand,
Then with a gesture, proud and free,
  Which awes the guards who round her stand,
He lifts his sword,—and not in vain:
One moment, and his hand has ta'en
  A golden ringlet from her head.
" In after years I come again;
  Oh! think of me," he said,
Then swiftly turned and glided by,
Through outstretched arm and wondering eye.

PART II.

The youthful Queen her sixteenth year
At length has closed; now must she bear
Herself a monarch's part to fill,—
'Tis so proclaims her father's will;
    And he ordains, by fixed decree,
That she shall early wed
A royal youth, and gently bred,
    And famed in deeds of chivalry.
And she must sit upon her throne,
    While they who come to claim her hand
Must pass before her one by one,
    Till she shall bid the chosen stand,
And give to him her royal ring,
And bid the people hail their king.

The day is fixed,—on foreign shores
    The heralds have proclaimed it near;
And many a royal stranger comes
    Dreaming that he the prize shall bear.
The day is fixed,—the day is come,—
    The palace gates are opened wide,

And, lovely in her youthful bloom,
The gentle Queen appears, the destined bride.

She sits upon her throne that hour
Where she in infancy had stood,—
Pale, pale, her cheek as lily flower,
Save that the mantling blood,
At every trumpet-flourish, flies,
And stains her cheek with deepest dyes.

A bridal robe of white is flowing
Her graceful form around:
Wreathed with her crown white roses blowing
Her lovely brow has bound.
Lovely she is,—but marble white,
And her blue eyes turn tremblingly,
Shrinking before her subjects' sight,
Fearfully, mournfully.

She deems it hard that she must take
A hand, perchance, without a heart,
And dreads, too, for her subjects' sake,
To act a thoughtless part.
And now before her aching eye
A shadowy form is passing by;

And now within her trembling mind
She finds an image deep enshrined.

But the trumpet sounds, and the hall of state
Is opened wide to the princes that wait;
They come, as their varying fancies move,
To seek or to seize her maiden love,—
Some with their trains, and some alone,
To pass before her throne.

And, as the doors are open flung,
She gathers up her heart,
And arms her eye, and prompts her tongue,
To do her needful part,
And calls to mind her father's kingly mien,
That she may also prove herself a Queen.

* * * * * * * *

They have passed by,—the princes all,—
But silent still around the hall
She turns a searching eye;
And paler still her cheek has grown,
And drooping sits she on her throne,—
A touching sight to see.

For disappointment in that hour
First chills her with its blighting power,—
First teaches e'en how queens must bear
The chance and change of life to share.

But, sudden, see that radient gaze,
And see her bright, her blue eyes raise;
And see the blush upon her cheek,—
Who is it comes her hand to seek?

Again the trumpet rang, and every eye
Turned to the palace-gate inquiringly.
One stranger-knight drew near the throne,
And bowed, as each in turn had done,
Then raised his stately form, and prest
A golden ringlet to his breast.

Though earliest youth had passed away,
Yet none with him might vie that day
    In manly beauty, princely grace;
Though unattended there he came,—
Though all unknown his land and name,—
    Each heart confessed his royal race.

There was a pause of silence,—then drew near
The lordly chamberlain to interfere.
"Who art thou?" loud and fierce he cried;
"Conrad the Prince," he calm replied,
And slowly gazed around the hall
On prince, and warrior, and all.

The chamberlain drew back amazed,—
Amazed on him the princess gazed;
"Conrad the Prince!" then from her throne
With lightest step she hurried down;
"Oh! answered now my ceaseless prayer,—
Conrad the king, be seated there;
Take thou thy throne,—it is not mine,—
Crown, throne, and sceptre, all are thine.
My people!" spoke she to the throng,
"My last command I give you now;
Oh! greet him with a welcome tongue
Your king and mine, and humbly bow."

At once, at once, the changeful crowd
Shouted the Prince's name aloud,
And clashed the sword, and bent the knee,
With a tumultuous loyalty.

And while they bend, with native grace,
    And native dignity of mien,
The princess bowed her lovely face.
    Not calmly this has Conrad seen;
While gentlest tear-drop dimm'd his eye,
And smile of love passed fondly by.
"Not so," he said, and took her hand,
And bent his head, and whispered low;
None hear, but all may understand,—
They see her blushing smiling brow;
They see her rich and sparkling ring
On Conrad's finger glittering,
And once more raise their glad acclaim,
Shouting their King and Queen's united name.

A HIGHLAND LEGEND.

"The healing work of sorrow is complete."
RODERICK.

Three times the hand of death had come,
And struck them in their happy home;
Three times their hopes had risen high
Only to fall more hopelessly;
Three times, with wailings loud and deep,
They hang o'er those who sweetly sleep;
But through their showers of stormy tears
No rainbow in the sky appears.

Their eyes had seen two children, fair and loved,
In the first spring-time of their life removed,—
Another stay a longer while,
To glad them with its sunny smile,
With dawning mind and prattling voice
To bid their inmost hearts rejoice;

They lay it down to die,
Painlessly and quietly,
And leave its home a place
Of utter dreariness.

And they had sorrowed with despair,
With most unholy grief;
They had no hope, no thought to bear,—
They asked not for relief.
The charm of deep submission's power
To soothe a dark and joyless hour,—
The might of faith,—the strength of love—
They did not seek,—cared not to prove:
The very passion of their grief was dear;
It seemed to fill the place by death left void and drear.

'Twas in the olden time, when for the dead
The custom was, a mournful feast to spread;
And friends were called from far and near
The hospitality to share.
They met, before the dead to eat,—
To drink the bowl of cheerfulness;
Nay more, amid the deep distress,
While mournful numbers beat,

The custom was, a measure sad and slow
To dance before the form that saw nor joy nor woe.

To us such custom seems a fearful thing;
But times and habits changes bring,
And tenderest love in them might be
With what were now a heartless glee.
Nay, even the dance to them might speak
Of sorrow which the heart could break;
Softened and calmed, serene and still,
Submitting to the Chastener's will,
Ready to rise from deepest woe,
The lo.ing tasks of earth to do.

These sorrowing parents, like the rest,
Had never thought to shun the feast:
Twice they the festive board had spread
Beside their lifeless children's bed;
But it was done with sullen heart,
And they the while remained apart.
No grateful kindly looks were thrown;
No wonted courtesies were shown.
Angered and crushed, with sense of pain,
They feared not God,—they loved not man.

And now their last and loveliest flower
    Has gone to her long rest:
'Tis early spring, but yet an icy shower
    In that cold clime has strewed the breast
Of the fair earth with wintry snows.
Forth 'mid the chilling blast the father goes,
Amid the flocks that climb the neighbouring hill,
To seek a lamb for his sad festival.

With many a cry that wrings his breast
He goes upon his mournful quest,
But scarce has faced the threatening skies
When, lo, a stranger meets his eyes,
Who stands before his cottage-door,
Heedless of snow-flakes drifting o'er,
And stays him in a gentle tone to say
"Why go you forth in grief upon this cheerless day."

The man was silent at the words,—an awe
    He could not fathom o'er his senses stole;
Something there was about the form he saw
    That seemed to touch him in his inmost soul,—
Hushing the storm of his rebellious will
With such a power as His, who bade the waves
    "be still."

Severely simple was the stranger's dress,—
Solemn his brow, though full of gentleness.
His voice, in accents strangely sweet and clear,
Fell on his listener's startled ear,
And, as to one with right and power to ask,
He meekly told the nature of his task.

"What is the lamb you haste to seek?"
Again those thrilling accents bid him speak.

"The very best," he swift replied,
"Of all which climb this steep hill side;
And humbly now I bid thee share
My sorrowful, yet festal cheer."

The stranger heeded not the words he spake,
  But asked again more earnestly;
"And when upon your fold you break,
  To carry thence a lamb to die,
How do your sheep receive you? Do they stand
Sullen to hear your stern command?
Or do their bleatings, wild and shrill,
Your grieved unwilling spirit fill?"

"Nay, not like this," he said, "they do rejoice
To see me come; they know my voice,

And follow at my lightest breath,
Alike to pasture or to death."

The stranger looked upon him, grave and sad;
"And is it thus with you," he answer made.
"Far otherwise my sheep receive
The varying calls I choose to give:
I come to them, and, from mine own,
Ask, as is meet, the loveliest one;
But what I seek, with grudging eye
They give, and, dared they, would deny.
I cannot draw my sheepfold near,
But clamorous murmurs greet mine ear;
And this from those whom I have blest
With prospering toil, and peaceful rest,
Through changing years have watched and fed,
Pouring my mercies on their head."

He ceased,——the man looked up amazed,—
Looked up, and then more wondering gazed.
He looked around, behind, before,
But found the visitant no more.
No sounds of a retreating form
Fell through the pauses of the storm;

No lightest footprint on the ground,
Though soft in snow, could there be found.
He was alone, where late had stood, ——
Was it a form of flesh and blood?

He paused one thoughtful moment there,
Then hurried to the hill;
Swift as the deer his footsteps were,—
His murmuring voice was still.
Upon his outward man had past a change;
A change had come within more deep and strange.

The guests arrived: with grave but courteous brow
He bade them welcome to the house of woe.
No tear was in his eye,—no sullen word
From his so late rebellious lips was heard;
Nay more,—that every guest might see
How patient deepest grief could be,
So overcome, so calm, resigned,
That passion there no home could find,
Himself he rose the task to do,
To dance the movement sad and slow,—
The custom of an olden day,
Past with the time itself away.

'Tis told that sons and daughters, good and fair,
    Grew up, and flourished in that happy home:
So oft unfettered mercy will appear
    To crown one evil overcome.
But 'tis not ever so; nor may we think
That penitence shall surely drink
The cup of blessing;—it must sow in tears;
The reaping may not be for mortal years.

See Mrs. Grant's "Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland."

THE ONLY SON.

"They also serve who only stand and wait."

MILTON.

Great deeds are often sung: glory is shed
Upon the hero and the martyr's brow;
Though in dishonoured dust they make their bed,
Around that bed the flowers of memory grow.
But there are conflicts, silent and unsung,
Harder perchance than martyr's hearts have wrung.

There was a mother had an only son,
One of earth's jewels,—such a noble boy;
A child he seemed by prayers unceasing won,
And long withheld to make a greater joy.
Joy he brought with him: o'er his young repose,
By night, by day, thanksgiving's voice arose.

The mother's love was great, and hard indeed
The trial which that love was called to know;

Yet though its record make the heart to bleed,
I rather speak of him who caused her woe,—
Whose bright youth faded 'ere its bloom was yet,—
'Ere well the morn was up, whose sun for ever set.

He was a noble boy,—somewhat perchance
Untamed,—yet in his wildest liberty
So tied with chains of his own innocence,
And by his mother's love, that to be free
Was but to go where a pure nature led,
As 'twere a glory circling round his head;

So full of life,—one of those souls who seem
Born to mount upward with aspiring wing.
'Twere hard to tell the soarings of his dream,
To count the opening blossoms of his spring;
He was to do great deeds,—he was to be
The hero of some high ideal chivalry.

Such was the promise of his early years,—
Such were the pantings of his ardent mind.
Behold him now. Oh! mother, dry thy tears:
A brighter crown that pallid brow will bind
Than in his fancied triumphs he had won;
More than a hero is that only son.

The days of health, the days of hope, are o'er,—
He must drag on a slow declining life;
For him no wreaths of honour are in store,—
For him no triumph as for him no strife.
No generous deeds will gild his youthful name;
No wrongs redressed win him a world-wide fame.

The morning dawns upon his languid bed,
And his eyes open to the new-born day;
Vanish the tempting dreams by slumber shed,—
He wakes to *night*,—night is that sun-bright ray,
Which shines alone upon his clouded doom,
Lighting his long dark passage to the tomb.

Will ye not ask how bows that ardent soul
To such a fate as tempts man to despair?
How sees he summers, winters, autumns, roll,
All changing round him while he still is *there?*
The only thing it seems that changes not
By pain, by sorrow, tied to one sad spot.

Oh! more than hero was that only son.
As lofty spirits meet the powers of ill,
He met the doom it was in vain to shun;
His the unblenching eye, the steadfast will.

But higher yet,—not his the strength that *steels*,
For he bows *thankful* to the pangs he *feels*.

I know not if in night's long silent hours,
    When none beheld him save his God on high,
Whether with aching heart and failing powers
    He wrestled not with mighty agony:
I only know that when the morning broke,
He with the same sweet patient smile awoke.

His mother knelt beside his couch of pain,
    And tears fell fast, until her eyes were dim,
To see the morning's sunny dawn again,
    And know it brought no ray of joy to him;
While still the proud young voice, the glancing eye,
Of other times were bright in memory.

Then would he stretch to her his thin pale hand,
    And read her grief, forgetful of his own,—
Would smile away her tears with love's command,
    And murmur in his low and earnest tone,
"Dear mother, now those early dreams forget;
New hopes are ours,—I am ambitious yet."

And youthful friends come flocking kindly by,—
Kindly——and yet, alas! how knows rude health
To master all that awful thought,—*to die.*
Full of their schemes, their joys, they come, their wealth
Of happiness,—and each consoling thought
With their own restless life and hopes is fraught.

Yet smiles he as they pass him fluttering on,
And meets their eager glances without shrinking;
No murmur on his lip, no heart's low groan,—
Yea, of his own sad lot he is not thinking:
He has o'ercome, in manhood's hardest fight,
Self to forget and live in other's light.

There is no more to tell of this young life:
Submission only had that life to give.
First sank the body 'neath the wasting strife,
Then the mind's vigour,—and he yet does live.
Here we are fain to weep his early doom:
Will it ask sorrow when beyond the tomb?

SKETCH OF A CONVENT.

A FRAGMENT.

"Less pure than these is that strange Indian bird
That never dips in earthly streams its bill;
But when the sound of coming showers is heard
Looks up, and from the clouds receives her fill."

CURSE OF KEHAMA.

"La même faiblesse qui nous fait trouver des écueils au milieu du monde, et de la cour, nous aurait fait une tentation de la retraite même."

MASSILLON.

How holily, how peacefully,
Did those calm days pass by;
No passion to disturb, or care
To fret the soul with hope or fear;
Devotion's ceaseless voice, to bless
The full deep calm of holiness.

How peacefully!—a peace which thou,
Bright world, hast not the power to give;
Not the cold calm that smooths the brow,
And leaves the sorrowing heart to grieve;

Not the dull peace of passion past,—
The transient hushing of the blast;
But such a peace as springs within,—
An everflowing fount divine,—
The calm repose of souls that rise
Above earth's clouds, to pierce the skies:
Such peace the high inspired Saint
Felt in its depth but could not paint.

By night, by day, the voice of prayer
From purest hearts is rising there;
The lowly lofty chaunt of praise
There calm sweet voices ever raise;
There ceaseless cares the suffering bless;
There youth is won to holiness.
There is the weary wanderer led
On peaceful couch to rest his head.
There, for the world that heeds them not,
    The intercession mounts to Heaven;
Nor is the sinner's name forgot,
    Nor the sad heart with sorrow riven.
Oh! who shall call it useless life;
Though they have fled earth's noise and strife,

May not a few turn calm away,
For that wild world to watch and pray.

And yet, e'en there, (alas! 'tis ever so
In fairest earthly gardens weeds will grow);
E'en there, where all so guarded was and pure,
With scarce a dream to tempt or to allure,—
E'en there the sinful world its votaries knew:
There were whose words alone rose up to Heaven;
The prayer and praise for them no charm could shew:
To earth, to earth alone, their thoughts were given.
There pride had found as sure a rest
As on the monarch's jewelled breast;
There, through the guarded cloistered soul,
Earth's wild and stormy passions roll.
And scorn is there, and cold dull hate,
In hearts to love and Heaven consecrate.

The pure may pass along the tainted earth,
Nor catch one stain upon their purity;
But light are sternest vows, and little worth,
To free the earthy from earth's slavery:

Where sin, unvanquished, harbours in the mind,
No convent chains the giant foe can bind.

'Tis vesper time,—upon the lengthened row
Of sisters risen from prayer
The Abbess bends her pale wan brow,
Unwonted marked with care;
And motions with uplifted hand
To stay the passing footsteps of the band.

She glances round her children to behold:
It was a mingled throng; there were the old,
Whose unmarked years in peace had passed,
Counted by prayer and vigil, feast and fast.
Untired they the holy way had trod,
By man forgotten, but alive to God,
And now they wait, with calm and humble heart,
The welcome voice to call them to depart.
And holiness had cast a light
Upon each sunken aged eye,—
A gleam of heavenly beauty bright
Th' unfading star of purity.
Scarce did they mark the Abbess sign
Still wrapt in thoughtfulness divine.

And some there were of varying years,
With stern forbidding brow;
Their eyes you deemed had known no tears,
Their hearts nor love, nor penitence, could know.
How breathe they in that holy air,
Where every wind is winged to bear
Some wafted song of love to heaven,
Or some low prayer to be forgiven?
Oh! wayward is the heart of man;
Vainly we seek its thoughts to scan.
Now with the rest from prayer they rise,
Now to the Abbess turn their eyes;
And sadly sighs she as they raise
Their hard cold glance to meet her gaze.

And there were some whose blanched cheek,
And swollen eyes, of suffering speak,—
Still youthful forms, but bright no more,—
With beauty too much prized before:
Some who their early steps had turned
From where the light celestial burned,—
Had thirsting quaffed the cup of life,
And, tasting sin and pain and strife,

Ere yet too late, had backward hied
From the broad path and portal wide:
With humble glance, that strays not round,
They lift their bowed heads from the ground.
With willing heart they think to hear
Of some new discipline severe;
Unscared by penance, could they win
Pardon, and hope, and light within.

And there were some, above all others, one
Whose placid brow with cloudless brightness shone:
The light of youth and peace was on her cheek,
And her dark smiling eyes serenely speak.
A form so lovely, none, oh, earth!
Bloom brighter in thy halls of mirth;
And voice, and smile, and beaming glance,
All speak of spotless innocence.
She in the freshness of her youth,
Ere sin had touched the brightness of her truth,
Ere pain, or grief, or care, had shed,
One cloud or shadow o'er her head,
Had, birdlike, with the morning sprung,
To chaunt to heaven her early song.

She does not need *her* brow to raise,—
No need for her of searching gaze ;
She does not need *her* truth to prove,
For all is light, and all is love ;
Her heavenly faith is in her eye,
And gentle fearless purity.

The Abbess scans th' assembly o'er,
Then waves her faded hand once more ;
And, while the listening echo wakes,
She thus the solemn silence breaks :

* * * * * * * *

TEARS.

"Tears, idle tears,—I know not what they mean."
THE PRINCESS.

Dew of the Heart,—with pure affections glowing,—
Bright starting tear!
Unchecked, unbid, from love's full fount o'erflowing,
A crystal rare,—
Falling for others, brightest then and best;
Oh! be thou blest.

Blood of the Heart,—from her pierced anguish streaming,
Tear-drop of agony!
From wandering eyes, from brain too wildly dreaming,
Asking imploringly,
Sweet voices from the loved, the lost,—in vain,
Never to speak again.

Storm of the Heart,—from troubled fountain gushing,
Big burning tear!
Through inward passion to the surface rushing,
Convulsive there,
Expressing all the stormy spirit's woe,
Working below.

Balm of the Heart,—in dreary darkness kneeling,
Tear-drop of penitence!
Falling as sweet as evening slumber stealing
O'er lids of innocence,
Gleam of salvation, shining through the cloud
Of sin's black shroud.

Oh! with man's varied lot for ever blending
Through the world's strife;
The heart her soft or troubled rain still sending
On the field of life,—
Selfish or tender, passionate or clear,—
Thou many-featured tear.

CONSTANCY.

> " The strength of love is constancy.
> As came the honey from the lion's carcase,
> So sweetness comes of strength."
>
> EDWIN THE FAIR.

No word was said,—no plighted vow was given;
If love was told, 'twas silence spoke alone:
'Twas the mute drooping eye that dares not gaze,
Lest the resolved spirit be undone.

Fair is the blossom of a youthful love,
But fairer is the soul's controling power:
All cannot gather at their first fresh will;
High is the hope that waits the appointed hour.

He goes in silence,—seeks a distant land,—
To toil, as even the highborn must for bread;
Nor asks he from his loved one tears or prayers,
Nor, save in thought, pours blessings on her head.

He parts in silence; many stand around,
    And all his farewell take,—save her alone;
She stands in silence, silent, tearless, still:
    Their hands one moment meet,—and he is gone.

So they lived on,—the broad sea flowed between;
    So they lived on,—parted, unshackled, free:
And wide for them the world its portals flung,
    Beckoning their youth its varied joys to see.

He bore for her the absence and the toil,—
    The lonely dawning of each dawning year,—
The aching void, the thirst for sympathy,
    Sweet words of hope, of comfort, and of cheer.

He bore for her strange looks from other eyes,
    Which *would* have smiled on him, and made
        him glad;
He bore, perchance, ah! worse than all,—the doubt,—
    The pangs of jealous fear, which make men mad.

Strong was such love; and yet I know not well
    If hers was not a harder, higher truth:
From distant dreary toil 'twas sweet to spring
    To rest with her,—the day-star of his youth.

But she had not to toil, save the light toil
　Of blessing all whose footsteps crossed her path;
And she was in her home, and love was there,—
　Freedom and joy,—methinks 'twas higher faith.

And beauty's glory shone about her head,
　And smiles were for her wheresoe'er she went;
And gazes followed as she past along,
　And soft low words with softer glances blent.

The years went by; there came no message home,
　E'en light as air th' unfettered love to bind;
Years of successless toil, and wearying care,—
　Years when they looked for hope, and none could
　　find.

They passed at length,—then . . . . needs it now
　　say more,
　Methinks the tale is told,—joy came at last;
The spark of hope rose bright into a flame:
　The sweet spring followed when the cold was past.

What matter now the years of dreariness?
　Springs not joy deeper from the constant will?
The flower of love grows fairest when the heart
　Has strength to sow in hope, love, and be still.

THE DEATH OF THE POOR.

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."

In poverty and dreariness,
In sickness and in weariness,
Mortal decay:
Upon her restless bed,
Turning her aching head,
At morn she lay,

In sight of angel throngs,
Filling with their sweet songs
The vault of Heaven.
In peace that knows no fear
Of sin, or pain, or care,
She lies at even.

Seems not the transit strange?
We cannot grasp the change
To so much bliss.
Grudge not the wasting powers,
The painful patient hours;
They lead to this.

THE OLD AND NEW YEAR.

Weep, for the year is falling
Into the arms of sleep,—
Past, past, without recalling;
Then who can choose but weep.
The wild winds o'er it sweep;
They wail it from the sky,
And dirges loud and deep,
Proclaim its hour to die.

Smile, for a year is dawning,—
A bright, a fresh new year;
Which, with its earliest morning,
New hope, new love, will bear.
Some storms, perchance, may hover near,—
But, see how purely white;
No cloud of sin or sorrow there,—
It rises on the sight.

Weep, for the passing hours
    Are sorrowful to view,
Yielding of wasted powers
    A record sad but true.
Like flowers, that in the spring-time grew,
    Your high resolves are fled,
And, frail as gems of morning dew,
    No lingering radiance shed.

Yet smile, the year awaking
    New hope, new might, imparts;
At once, your armour taking,
    Go forth with fervent hearts.
Fear not temptation's fiery darts;
    Shrink not before the strife;
But, with the year that freshly starts,
    Redeem your wasted life.

Then weep while you are smiling,
    And smile while ye must weep;
E'en while fresh hope's beguiling,
    Think on the hours that sleep.
Let passing joys and sorrows keep
    Their place in memory clear,
And, taking root, and striking deep,
    Bear fruit in the bright New Year.

FLIRTATION.

" 'Tis an old tale, and often told."—MARMION.

Now pale her cheek, blanched with a nameless woe;
Now passion dyes it with her crimson glow.
Her eye now drooping, humbled, downcast, sad,—
Now, flashing raised, in haughty splendour clad:
Oh! Man, it is thy work,—she might be seen
So late a spirit gay, bright, playfully serene.

Loved and forsaken,—made a sport, a toy,—
Sought, flattered, played with, for a moments joy,—
Pleased to bid love in her dark eyes appear;
A month he called her Fairest of the Fair.
The dream gone by, he coldly deems it well,
He but in airy words has told his passions spell.

Loved and forsaken,—ah! but loving still,—
So tell those eyes which pride and sorrow fill,
That flattering voice into her heart has sank;
The draught of love she has too deeply drank.
In vain the scorn that arms her fair young brow,—
The tortured heart beats brokenly below.

THE SNOWDROP.

"Her divine skill taught me this,
That from everything I saw
I might some invention draw."

GEORGE WITHERS.

Oh, lonely flower! oh, lowly, lovely, flower!
Whose nurture was within no rosy bower;
Thy cradle-bed laid deep in ice and snows,
Rocked by the wild wind when it fiercest blows.
From thy stern school dost thou no lesson bear?
The lowliest can teach if our dull hearts will hear.

I am the type, the flower of Innocence,
Nurtured in sorrow, that was my defence.
No sun of passion o'er my head has past,
So am I white and stainless to the last.
Would'st thou know more, unclose my leaves and see,
E'en now within, the seal of immortality. *

I am the flower of Patience: sharp and dread,—
All waves and tempests have rolled o'er my head.

* Green—the emblem of immortality.

None bloomed around my home,—companionless
I grew in darkness and in loneliness;
Yet have I never tired, but gently thróugh
Have struggled forth, my appointed task to do.

I am the flower of Lowliness. I raise
No eye to seek or court the passer's gaze;
Though in my breast my chiefest beauty lies,
I ne'er unclose my leaves to heedless eyes.
They who would know me must draw near and see
How many beauties lie shrined in humility.

I am the flower of Hope. Oh! sorrow come,
Dry thy dimmed eyes to look upon my bloom.
Through storm and darkness and the ice-bound earth
I have come forth to light, and spring, and mirth:
So too shalt thou, thy griefs' cold winter past,
Beneath the eternal sun spring forth to joy at last.

Oh, lonely flower! oh, lowly lovely flower!
Well would'st thou speak if our frail hearts had power
To follow thee,—if we, from grief and pain,
As pure, as patient, could come forth again.
If we, through storm and sin, through sun and mirth,
Robed in thy stainless robe, could walk the earth.

THE DREAD OF SORROW.

"As thy days so shall thy strength be."

We love to gaze upon the clear blue sky,
And oft we think 'twere sorrow to espy
The lightest shade upon it,—even a while ;
But then it comes, cloud gathering upon cloud,—
The lightnings flash upon the stormy shroud,—
And still we stand and watch,—admire, and smile.

And so, when breathing the pure air of joy
From grief, no pressure,—nor from fear, alloy,—
We shudder at the lightest thought of pain.
But then it comes, and then we find it too
Has sweetness of its own,—still as the dew
That falls at even, gentle as summer rain.

For grief, though stern, comes armed with power and might ;
Its shade we dread, yet blench not at its sight :
Clouds may precede, clouds on its track may rest.
But in the hour itself, unfelt, unknown,
Breathes through our spirits life of nobler tone ;
And light descends that makes e'en sorrow blest.

ON THE DEATH OF AN INFANT.

His languid eyes are closing;
    On the pale placid cheek
The lashes dark reposing,
    So wearily, so weak.
He gasps with failing breath,—
A faint and feeble strife with death.
Fainter and fainter still ; 'tis past,—
That one soft sigh,—the last.

Thy watching and thy fearing,
    Mother, is over now :
The seal of death is bearing
    That pale but angel brow.
And now, in the deep calm,
That follows days of wild alarm,
Thy heart sinks down, and weeps, and weeps,
O'er him who silent sleeps.

Oh! mother, hush thy crying,—
    The ill of life is o'er:
E'en now his wings are flying
    Unto a happy shore.
Those wings of stainless white,
Unfolded ne'er to earthly sight,—
He spreads them now; they bear him high
Unto the angel company.

From sight of evil shrinking,—
    From thought of grief like thine,—
At the first summons sinking
    Into the arms divine,—
Oh! thou, who knowest life,
Temptation, trial, toil, and strife,
Wilt thou not still thine aching breast
To bless his early rest.

ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

It was a star, that in the twilight gleam
Sent forth its feeble vacillating beam,
    While tempests gathered in the vale below:
The storm rolled nearer,—and the clouds of night
Passed o'er that star, and hid it from our sight.

WILKIE'S PICTURE, CALLED THE SICK ROOM.

What will he say upon whose lips the dread
Sentence of life or death depends? Beside the bed
The mother stands, hangs over anxiously,
From her pale child unto his face, her eye
Fitfully wandering. As though that eye could dar
Through fleshly barriers to his secret heart
She scans him o'er, with gaze through terror wild,
Then turns a feeble smile upon her child.
That feverish pulse seems from *her* soul to beat;
She shudders at those answers faint and sweet,
Then draws a deep drawn breath of hope as he
On the young sufferer's brow smiles tenderly.

Upon his stick, without the half-closed door,
The father leans,—eyes darting far before
His bending form, to catch hope's faintest ray,
Lighting the mother's gaze. He cannot stay

Afar,—and yet so dreads to hear her doom
That he shrinks backward. But the hour is come
When all must be revealed. Alas! those flowers bright,
That bloom beside her bed, scarce from their sight
Will they have faded, ere she too must fade,—
Their fairer flower. In dust their hopes are laid.
It is no time for flattering tongue to speak;
Better tell all, although the heart should break.

And she, the while,—she for whom all this care,—
She only waits with an untroubled air.
No need for her to ask: long long ago
Her heart hath taught her what they now must know.
She spoke it not, but in the silent cell
Of her own soul, on it she pondered well,—
The agony of death,—love's parting pain,—
The unseen world,—till she was calm again;
And now they too must learn that hope is fled.
She, though with failing breath and sinking head,
Can hush their bitterness of grief to rest,
And bless in death as she in life has blest.

ON A CHILD SLEEPING.



Pure as the waters of a crystal rill,
As its calm surface, passionless and still,—
Bright as the moonbeam dancing on the wave,
Now lightly smiling, now serenely grave,—
The blush of life just dawning on thy cheek,
Soft as the tints the rose's whiteness streak;
So art thou sleeping,—from thy guiltless breast
Springing this calm repose, this beauty-breathing rest.

What blessed fancies, bright and without number,
Are flitting o'er thee in this smiling slumber?
Do heavenly painters trace before thine eyes
Unclouded pictures of their sinless skies?
Do angel-voices whisper to thine ear
The song which only innocence can hear?
Or, rapt in bliss, for thought, for sound, too deep,
Tast'st thou immortal peace in thy soft sleep?

How many rest like thee, like thee must wake,
And through this grosser world their pathway take,—
The cloudless pictures fading on the sight,—
The angel-whispers lighter and more light;—
Yet in that world there is a peace as blest,
In the true heart's repose, in the unspotted breast.

WISHES.

A little girl said, "We should both like to be birds. Mary would like to fly, and I should like to build a nest."

One would go forth upon the field of life,
Riding on wings of fancy, bright and high,
Ready for battle, eager for the strife,
Flushed with the early dream of victory.
Nor earth alone,—on wings of faith she'd rise,
Turn to the sky her piercing eagle eyes;
Nothing too high for her winged sight to view,
Nothing too great for her strong will to do.

The other had her visions, soft and fair,
Silently pictured in a loving breast;
She chose some shadowy spot by waters clear,
Where green boughs waved, and there she built her nest.

She imaged forth the time when to that home
She might behold her infant fledgelings come;
When she might watch them, tend them, guard from
woes,
Or 'neath her wings might sing them to repose.

Who lit the burning sun to shine in Heaven,
Owns the frail twinkling of the glowworm's light?
To each their task one Hand divine has given,
And they Him serve who do it in his sight.
They toil for Him, who rise with willing heart,
Unscared, untired, to take the struggling part;
And they too toil, who, with a silent faith,
Love God and man in duty's simple path.

TO A YOUNG NUN.

"I pray not that thou should'st take them out of the world, but that thou should'st keep them from the evil."

The storms of the rough world, the sin and strife,
Affrighted her,—it was a pain to dwell
Amid the ceaseless noise; and so farewell
Calmly she bade to all of earthly life.
The bounding hopes and pleasures, bright though brief,
Which many a young and guileless spirit fill,
Reached not her heart,—so passionless and still,
She found in earth's fair promise no relief.
She feared her robe of whitest innocence
To stain, but walking though this world of sin,
So fled to seek in solitude defence.
Nay gentle one,—thou might'st have trusted in
Thy Father's guarding Hand, and learn'd to love
E'en earth, whose waves reflect the stars above.

USE AND BEAUTY.

Seek not too rudely for the *use* of things
 ' Tis a cold question of the good and fair,
 To ask "What hath it done?" The balmy air
Fans the bare mountain's brow,—the wild flower
 springs
Where no fond eye can mark its blossomings;
 And all unmindful of a listening ear,
 Springing from earth with descant sweet and clear,
To the fresh breeze the bird of morning sings.
Then fear not thou what seems a thankless toil,
 But let the inward beauty of thy mind
 In outward form its bright expression find,
Ungrudging though it bloom on barren soil:
Casting on unknown waves thy precious grain,*
Secure in hope thou'lt find its worth again.

* Eccles. ch. ii. v. 1.

MONEY.

. . . . "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts."

MILTON.

Wish not for wealth,—ah! even the holy sigh
As their eyes rest upon the glittering gold,
And ofttimes marvel, reverently bold,
That Heaven to them the treasure should deny;
For had they gold, oh! where were poverty,—
Where were the careworn, hungry, and the cold,—
What smiles, what laughing eyes would they behold,
Bright from their fount of gladdening charity!
Yet sigh not still. Could'st thou thus all distress
Relieve, this were no trying world for thee:
God doth not *need* thy gifts, thy bounteousness;
He can relieve his poor if good it be.
Thy wealth is thine *own* trial,—and not less
This saddening thought,—thy powerlessness to bless.

TEMPTATION.

Judge not lest ye be judged,—too swift are we
To raise our voice against the wandering one,
Too careless to bethink how little known
Are all the trials, temptings, restless agony,—
Now hope, now fear, now strife, now victory
Through which the weary steps are guided on,
From the clear light, to stand awake, alone,
In the dark cloud of sin and misery.
Oh! be *thou* strong and steadfast. Keep thine eye
Upon the upward path of truth and purity;
Through might of love, through strength of tenderness,
Nor sin, nor sinner, clothe in angel's dress:
Yet pity still the erring,—search and own,
But for God's grace thou too dark paths hadst known.

THE DEATH OF THE IDIOT BOY.

"God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen."

He sleeps at last—the lightless life is o'er,—
The vacant eye is closed in calm and peace;
He rests from ill,—yet o'er his grave they pour
The grief of loving hearts in tears that will not cease.

He was earth's child, yet earth for him disclosed
No scene of beauty, and no sight of woe;
Afar, perchance, his wandering mind reposed,
But here, unmarked, suns shine and tempests blow.

Death comes at last,—a soft and gentle hand,—
To snap the thread that binds to life unknown;
They know it best,—yet sad his parents stand;
For silent, senseless, still he is their own.

Sadly they mark him fading hour by hour,
Weeping, yet powerless, watch the last dread strife;
When, sudden, see a beam of heavenly power
Break through the storm-cloud of his dreary life.

He raised his vacant eye,—'twas gleaming bright,—
He spoke, and sweet his accent was and clear;
It was a flash of bright celestial light,
And "Abba Father" were the words they hear.

Was it the fount of grace that stirred within,
Fruit of the seal upon his young brow prest?
Was it the inward voice of life divine
Which owned its home before it sank to rest?

Was it, though dead to earth, his spirit still
Beheld the heavenly vision high and dread,
And converse held with things invisible?—
We cannot tell,—he spoke, and he was dead.

Hushed was his voice again,—they heard no more,—
Through all his life he spoke but to his God;
The eye is closed,—the listless life is o'er,—
Sweet now he sleeps beneath the fresh green sod.

Beside an old cathedral's holy pile *
    To him a lowly monument they rear,
And there each day with fond and tearful smile
    An old man bends, then passes on to prayer.

Lowly and simple is his gravestone made,
    And simple is the record it has given;
But all it tells of him who there is laid,
    His whole of life, a prayer, a glance to Heaven. †

* A Fact.—The tomb of the Idiot Boy may been seen at Kilkenny Cathedral.

† "I have often applied to idiots, in my own mind, that sublime expression of Scripture that 'their life is hidden with God.'"

WORDSWORTH'S LIFE.

THE DEATH OF SCHWARTZ.*

" 'Tis strange that death should sing."—
KING JOHN.

Stretched on his couch of pain and death,
Tranquil the old man lay,
So tranquil, they deemed who watched around,
That his spirit had passed away.

A toilsome fight he had bravely fought,
Not for the world's renown,—
A brighter hope and a purer thought,
A deathless heavenly crown.

In the wildest realms of the wide-spread earth
He had laboured, and toiled, and prayed;
And all of sorrow and toil was o'er,
On that peaceful pillow laid.

* For this account of Schwartz's Death, see Le Bas's Life of Bishop Middleton.

No word he gave, nor a farewell sign;
But he lay in his death-like sleep,
With a brow so calm, and so smiling bright,
They deemed it a sin to weep.

There was a strain he had loved in youth,
A sweet and a holy strain;
Ever in life from his lips it burst
In sorrow, or joy, or pain.

In a distant land it had breathed of home;
Of Heaven it spoke on earth;
He chaunted it low in his hours of pain,
And blithely in hours of mirth.

"And now," said one, "o'er this sainted head
What requiem can flow
More meetly than that sweet strain which shared
His hours of joy and woe?

"He lies in his calmest deepest sleep,
Oh! bend above his head,
And waft his soul with that holy hymn
To the mansions of the dead."

The lips he loved, in murmuring tone,
Poured forth the long-loved strain;
A soft low chaunt it was, and seemed
To wake the dead again.

For soon as the notes had died away
In the stillness of the air,
Clearer and sweeter than mortal voice
Another sound they hear.

The tones were breathed from the bed of death,
Distinct, yet soft and low,
And thrilled through the air as the winds of heaven
In viewless breezes blow.

His eye was closed, and his face was still,
Yet with angel's voice he sung,
As if on the dark dread stream of death
To his life's loved strain he clung.

He sang, and around his couch they stood
With hushed and startled breath,
To hear that strange and thrilling song,—
The melody of death.

He ceased, and awestruck they gazed on his brow,
But he never moved again;
For his soul was loosed from its mortal bond
In that sweet expiring strain.

TO ———

"D'un cœur qui 'taime
Mon Dieu qui peut troubler la paix."
ATHALIE.

Oh! gentlest lady, on thy calm clear brow,
The seat of holiest wisdom and pure thought,
I seek in vain the trace of years, whose flow
So much of grief, and pain, and care have brought.
Not that in passing they have left no shade,
For there is speaking memory in thine eye,
But that in highest Heaven thy hopes were laid,
And those high hopes have had the victory.

No furrowed line of care is on thy brow;
Clear as it shone in joy, so shines it now;
And, though the radiant sun of hope and glee
Has left thy marble cheek and quiet eye,
A new-born ray, a moonbeam, still and clear,
Falls from the sky, and smiles unclouded there.
And so, sweet lady, as a beacon star,
'Mid the dark storm-clouds, tranquil, shines afar,
So dost thou lure us on, to fix our eyes
Through clouds of earth on Heaven's unclouded skies.

FINIS.

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